

## MY CUP OVERFLOWS WITH GRATITUDE AND PRAISE

Psalms 23: You anoint my head with oil, my cup runs over.

I enjoy using all my senses of sight, sound, hearing and taste as I follow David's journey with Yahweh, the Great Shepherd, as recorded in the 23rd Psalm. I try to feel the cushion of lush green grass beneath my feet and smell the greenness of the pastures. I try to feel and taste the sweet refreshing waters, and enjoy periods of rest and refreshment. I dread the frightening passages through dark places where hidden dangers lurk among the shadows, but I am aware of the protective presence of the Lord at all times.

Some scholars think this psalm is an exquisite composite of a one-year cycle as the shepherd leads his sheep from the comforts of the home place in the valley, through desert country and frightening valleys to the high country in summer. In the fall they return to the home place where they spend the winter in the security of barns and plenty of food.

The feast described here may be a banquet to celebrate a successful season. It is based on the ancient Near Eastern idea of hospitality.

Yahweh lays a fabulous table as his guests look on. Any enemies, whether inward struggles or outward persecutors, are totally unable to harm them or even to mar the joy of the meal because of the dominant presence of such a host. The intention is to magnify God's power and full hospitality rather than any gloating at the frustration of enemies.

As a symbol of acceptance, love and special recognition, the host then singles out the honored guest and pours or drips scented oil upon his head. Often the host would place his hand on the guest's head and spread the oil over the hair as a further symbol of personal blessing.

There are many instances in Scripture where a prophet would anoint a person to indicate that God had chosen that person, and set him apart for special service for God. The New Testament speaks of laying on of hands as a symbol of blessing and setting a person apart for special service.

The poet's joy at this point is boundless for he has been chosen as the special guest! He is nearly overcome by it and can only say, "my cup is running over with abundance." God's bounty is more that he can take in; it is literally too much for him. God is indeed an extravagant host. The poetic composer found himself luxuriating in the presence of Yahweh.

The overflowing cup was a powerful symbol in the days of David. The hosts in the ancient East used to send a message to guests through their glass that was kept filled, or allowed to become empty. As long as the cup was kept full, the guest knew he was welcome. But when the cup was empty, the host was hinting that the hour was late. On the occasions, however, when the host really enjoyed the company of a person, he filled the cup to overflowing. He didn't stop when the wine reached the rim; he kept pouring until the liquid ran over the edge of the cup and down onto the table. David was overwhelmed that Yahweh wanted him to stay at the table because the table before was wet from the overflow.

We are God's guests of honor.. He has provided abundant blessings and we need to look at how wet our table is. Behold how great Christ's love for us is since he died in our place. Through him we become the sons and daughters of God. As children, we belong in God's house and are entitled to the privilege of eating at God's table. Each time we participate in the Lord's Supper or Communion we experience the overwhelming evidence that God wants us at his table. We can sing with the psalmist, "My cup run over with joy."