

Yeshua and the Woman with the Issue of Blood

An Aramaic Perspective

(Matthew 9:20–22, Mark 5:25–34, Luke 8:43–48)

++Rt. Rev. Dr. Vince McLaughlin, Th.D., D.Litt., Ph.D.

This incredible miracle is sandwiched between the narratives of the healing of Jairus' daughter. As Yeshua got up and began to follow Jairus with His disciples, He encountered a woman who had been losing blood for twelve years. She came from behind and touched the tzitzit of His garment. For she kept saying to herself, "*If only I touch His garment, I will be healed.*"

This woman as noted had been suffering with bleeding for twelve years reached out and grabbed the hem of Yeshua's garment. Yeshua responded by saying, "*Someone touched Me; I know that power has gone out from Me*" (Luke 8:46). The woman, realizing that she could not hide, "*came trembling and fell at His feet,*" telling Yeshua why she had touched Him and how she had been healed instantly.

St. Luke also notes that the whole crowd heard her explaining to Jesus why she had touched him. Sometimes our acts of faith need to be shared with many other people. The more acts of faith I see, the more I am likely to step out myself.

The bleeding woman had every reason to be fearful. Among religious Jews, it was — and still is — considered immodest and inappropriate to touch a man, even one's husband, in public. But even worse, this woman was ritually unclean and could spread her impurity to any person she touched (Leviticus 15:25–27). She could have faced serious consequences for such a bold action as stoning.

But this woman was desperate. Imagine not being touched by family or friends for twelve years. She had lived for over a decade in a perpetual state of shame as an outcast who was excluded from the social and spiritual life of her community. She felt she had nothing to lose, so she took a big risk. When she touched the hem of Yeshua's garment, she was instantly healed! Though Yeshua became ritually unclean by her touch, she became clean, and more importantly, whole again.

Notice this woman's fear: "*The woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at His feet and, trembling with fear, told Him the whole truth*" (Mark 5:33). Also notice Yeshua's gentle response: "*Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace*" (Mark 5:34). This underscores how radically differently Yeshua dealt with women than did other men of His day. Rather than being upset with her, which would have been the normal reaction from a rabbi or Levitical priest, He commended the woman's faith.

But of course, there is something more! A key detail often overlooked in this passage is that the woman touched "*the edge of his cloak*" (Matthew 9:20). She did not just touch the fringe, but rather His tzitzit, the ritual tassels placed on each corner (*kanaf*, in

Hebrew) of every four-corner garment. These tzitzit are described in the book of Numbers:

Adonai spoke to Moses saying, “Speak to Bnei-Yisrael. Say to them that they are to make for themselves tzitzit on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and they are to put a blue cord on each tzitzit. It will be your own tzitzit — so whenever you look at them, you will remember all the mitzvot of Adonai and do them and not go spying out after your own hearts and your own eyes, prostituting yourselves. This way you will remember and obey all My mitzvot and you will be holy to your God. I am Adonai your God. I brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God. I am Adonai your God.” – Numbers 15:37-41 TLV

These tzitzit were meant to remind Israel to faithfully follow the Lord by obeying His commandments. It is no coincidence that they were to be placed on all four corners of the garment and Tallit. *(There is an explanation of what a Tallit is at the conclusion of this manuscript)*

The root of all sin goes back to the Garden of Eden. The result of Adam and Eve’s disobedience was exile for them and all their descendants after them. Living in exile means living in a perpetual state of disconnection and separation that ultimately leads to death if not remedied. There are four aspects to exile: spiritual, emotional, relational, and physical.

The promise of redemption from exile is also connected to the number ‘four.’ At the Passover Seder, there are four cups of wine that correspond to the four aspects of redemption mentioned in Exodus 6:6-7 (TLV): *“I will bring you out,” “I will deliver you,” “I will redeem you,” “I will take you to Myself.”* At the final redemption, the Lord will *“lift up a banner for the nations, and assemble the dispersed of Israel, and gather the scattered of Judah from the four corners of the earth” (Isaiah 11:12 TLV).*

Also, there is a messianic promise that states,

For you who revere My Name, the sun of righteousness will rise, with healing in its wings. – Malachi 3:20 TLV

The word for “wings” in this verse literally means “corner” and is the same word used for the tassels on the four corners, known in Hebrew as the *arba kanfot*. This woman reached out and grabbed one of the four “wings” of Yeshua’s tunic. The Hebrew word for “corners” is *Kanaf* and the tassels are Tzitzit (*seet-see*).

Essentially, what he says is that when the Messiah came, there would be special healing powers in the tassels (Tzitzit) of His prayer shawl.

Now, Yeshua is a Torah observant Jewish Rabbi and what that means is that He would have been wearing a rabbinical prayer shawl called a *Tallit*. So, when this woman reaches out and touches the corner of His garment, she is demonstrating that she believes Yeshua is the Messiah and so she reaches out in faith, trusting, knowing, and

believing that if she could just touch the tassel on the end of His robe, she could be healed.

And in that instant when her fingertips touched the edge of His garment . . . the (*see-see*), the power of God is unleashed and her soul is healed and her body is healed. Twelve years of bleeding and of un-cleanliness . . . it's over in an instant.

This bleeding woman had been living in exile on all four levels. She had no physical contact with family and friends, could not publicly worship in the temple, was isolated and alone, and lived in a perpetual state of physical pain. But she found a fourfold healing by touching one of the four corners of Yeshua's garment, and thus she became an example of the messianic redemption that we can begin to experience right now when we reach out and touch Him!

Like her, we must have the faith to boldly reach out and seize the Lord so that we might find help and healing in our time of need.

Just like the woman with the issue of blood was viewed as unclean, many religious leaders in Yeshua's day viewed the Gentile nations as unclean and unworthy. This perspective was due to the fact that the nations of the world were pagan at this time, and their cultures were dominated by idolatry, bloodshed, and sexual immorality. Despite this, Yeshua had a very different view of Gentiles. He did not focus on their sin but on God's promise of redemption for all people.

Just like the woman who grabbed hold of Him and found personal redemption, one day all the nations of the world will do the same. As the prophet Zechariah wrote:

Many peoples and powerful nations will come to seek Adonai-Tzva'ot in Jerusalem, and to entreat the favor of Adonai." Thus says Adonai-Tzva'ot, "In those days it will come to pass that ten men from every language of the nations will grasp the corner of the garment of a Jew saying, 'Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.'" (Zechariah 8:22-23)

One day all peoples will grab hold of the Lord by attaching themselves to God's people. When this happens, exile will end, and the world will be healed!

On a more personal and practical level, women were not seen as equal to Jewish men. But Yeshua and the New Testament make it clear that "*there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female — for you are all one in Messiah Yeshua*" (Galatians 3:28 TLV). This does not mean there are no longer any differences or distinctions between men and women or Gentiles and Jews; rather, it implies a spiritual equality. There are no second-class citizens in God's kingdom.

4 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WOMAN WITH THE ISSUE OF BLOOD

What makes her stand out to us as such a great example to follow? The woman with the issue of blood was:

- A radical risk-taker – she went against the rules of her time to reach for her healing and blessing.
- Imperfect but unwavering in her faith – she had some beliefs that were not quite true, but she trusted in Yeshua’ power.
- Persevering – the crowd she had to go through was no ordinary crowd, but she pushed through anyway although she could have been crushed to death.
- Fearful but faith-filled – After she touched (cling to) Yeshua and He turned around, Scripture says “she came trembling”. She was not the most courageous, but she did it scared anyway.

POWERFUL LESSONS FROM THE WOMAN WITH THE ISSUE OF BLOOD

Let me suggest 5 powerful take aways that I hope will encourage your faith in God.

1. FAITH REQUIRES RISK

The woman with the issue of blood took a huge risk. To understand this, you have to know what the Bible says about a woman bleeding.

Come with me to the Old Testament.

When a woman has a discharge of blood for many days at a time other than her monthly period or has a discharge that continues beyond her period, she will be unclean as long as she has the discharge, just as in the days of her period. Any bed she lies on while her discharge continues will be unclean, as is her bed during her monthly period, and anything she sits on will be unclean, as during her period. Anyone who touches them will be unclean; they must wash their clothes and bathe with water, and they will be unclean till evening. (Leviticus 15: 25 – 27)

In Jewish culture, her bleeding disorder rendered her unclean. Everything and anyone she touched was unclean. According to Levitical law, she was not permitted to handle money or food, or attend the services of the synagogue. She really should not be physically close to anyone and certainly not in a crowd.

What she did, exposing others to her uncleanness, was a crime, punishable by law. And this is why she could not ask Yeshua for healing openly. Instead, she risked her life to access her healing secretly.

This is one of the more outstanding characteristics of the woman with the issue of blood. Her willingness to go out on a limb. Her illness was common among women and very difficult to cure.

But she persisted to the extent that she was ready to risk everything. Truth is that the only thing she had left to lose was her life and there was not much to her living anyway because of her illness.

If you find yourself in a desperate situation like this woman, maybe safety is not where your breakthrough lies. Put some skin in the game! Take a risk. Step out in faith in HIM.

2. TRUE FAITH ARRESTS GOD'S ATTENTION

Have you wondered, like the disciples, how in the world Yeshua knew that the woman with the issue of blood touched Him?

When Yeshua asked, "Who touched me?", the disciples thought that this was a ridiculous question. After all, He was in a crowd. Everybody was touching him. In fact, the word that describes the crowd really means that Yeshua was being suffocated by the crowd.

As He walked, He could hardly breathe because they were pressing so close to Him. How then did He discern this particular touch?

Let's do a brief word study.

The word touch comes from the root word *hapto* which means to fasten to or to cling to. When Yeshua asked, "*Who touched me?*" He was not referring to the act of someone putting their hand on Him. In fact, the story did not even say she touched Yeshua. Actually, she only touched His clothes. Yet Yeshua asked, "Who touched me?"

What Yeshua really asked was "*Who clung to me with their whole being in unwavering faith?*" You see, this woman was in a desperate situation. And this was her absolute last option and opportunity to escape her situation. So of course, she clung to the Almighty God in faith.

Many people in the crowd put their hands on Yeshua but this bleeding woman was the only one who truly touched Yeshua. Her faith was so powerful that it reached the Almighty God more deeply than anyone else in that crowd.

Yeshua did say he knew that someone touched him because power had gone out from Him. The faith evidenced in her connected with the Heavenly Power that cannot but honor authentic faith in trusting the Almighty God/Yeshua.

3. GOD'S ATTENTION TO YOUR FAITH IS NOT DIVIDED

The woman with the issue of blood teaches us that when God gives us His attention, He is never multitasking.

A faith as deep and unwavering as this woman's not only earns God's attention but it also secures His undivided attention. After the woman identified herself, Yeshua zoomed in on her.

Yeshua listened intently as she told her story. He listened as she described the shameful, disgraceful burden she had held for 12 years, the scorn she had suffered, the loneliness she had been bearing and the desperation she felt.

Despite the crowd, it seemed that no one else existed in those moments. There is no detail about how long it took for her to tell all that she had experienced. But it did not matter.

Yeshua did not hurry her along although a little girl was on the brink of death. It's not that He cared less about this little girl. Yeshua did not need to hurry. He has life and death in His hands.

At this moment, His daughter needed Him. He was fully present for her.

4. GOD WORKS WITH IMPERFECT FAITH

The woman with the issue of blood had faith but it was mingled with superstition. When she reasoned "*If I touch the hem of His garment...*" this referred to the popular superstitious belief that a person's powers could be transmitted through their clothes.

In Yeshua's case, when she talked about the hem of His garment, she was talking specifically about a particular Jewish practice. Every devout Jew wore four blue tassels on the fringes of the four corners of their outer garment as explained above.

This signified that they were a chosen people and the tassels served to remind them daily of whom they belonged to. It was one of those tassels that she wanted to touch.

But notice Yeshua's response to her: "*Daughter, your faith has healed you...*" In stating this explicitly, He was addressing her superstition. He wanted her to know that there is no power in clothes.

The real power was in her faith in the Almighty God. It was through her faith that she received healing.

Although Yeshua knew that her faith was mixed with superstition, He met her where she was. Her faith was accepted, even in its imperfection. It is interesting that she received her healing even without Yeshua consciously interacting with her. It just demonstrates God's nature. Even imperfect faith moves Him.

Do you want to touch the hem of Yeshua's garment? Know that it's not about what you are not or what you are not doing right in your life. It is about where your heart is in your interaction with the Almighty God. Yeshua valued authenticity in her faith while redirecting her away from her superstition. The Almighty God will do the same for you.

You do not have to be perfect in your faith to access the blessings of heaven. But you do need to have that deep, abiding faith that the Almighty God will do what He says He will do.

5. WHEN YESHUA HEALS, IT IS COMPLETE.

Faith is one of those spiritual disciplines that permeates all aspects of life. This bleeding woman was experiencing untold anguish across all areas of her existence.

Because of the Jewish rules about bleeding and the social stigma associated with being diseased, she was not able to enjoy healthy human relationships, whether romantic or otherwise.

She was isolated from her religious community. There was a belief that illness was God's way of punishing people so there is a great chance that she was shunned by her family and disowned by her father. As a woman in that society, this was an extremely vulnerable place to be. She had no one to cover for her or speak up for her.

This is perhaps one reason why Yeshua calls her daughter: to indicate to her that she had been restored. For so long she was an outcast. Ostracized. Defined by her disease. Her self-worth would have been trampled on. The isolation would have caused her to get used to being invisible in society.

But Yeshua assures her that she belonged to Him. She might have had no one to cover her but now she did. She didn't have anyone to defend her but now she did. She was unwanted but Yeshua claimed her openly.

Her physical healing, coupled with her new found identity in Christ, would now allow her to resume social interactions, participate in worship services, get a job, get married and even have children.

And there is more.

Yeshua says to her "*Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace.*" This final command really translates "*go into peace.*" This really meant that she not only received physical healing, but it also meant that she received HIS salvation and redemption.

That day, her soul was saved. The peace that comes with the assurance of salvation was to be hers from now on. She was given the rest that Yeshua promises to those who trust Him with their whole hearts.

When the Almighty God heals, your entire life is affected because faith spans all aspects of our being. God rewards those who stretch toward heaven in complete faith. He responds to authentic faith, even if imperfect. His attention is never divided for those who trust Him. And when God heals, it is complete, touching every area of life, even to eternity.

Tallit Explanation

The *Tallit* (prayer shawl) was to remind the Jew of the Commandments of the Torah. How do the fringes of the tallit remind one of the commandments? The numerical value of the word *tzitzit* (fringes) is 600. Each of the fringes contains 8 threads and 5 knots, making a total of 613. This number corresponds to the 613 commandments contained in the Torah.

"When the children of Israel are wrapped in their prayer-shawls, let them [feel] ... as though the glory of the [divine] Presence were upon them, for . . . Scripture does not say: '*That ye may look upon them*' [the fringes], but *That ye may look upon Him* [Number 15:39, that is, upon the Holy One, blessed be He.]"