Wedding Night

Yehudis Fletcher*

*Correspondence: yfletcher@gmail.com

Covered

Wrapped in white

My mother

led me to the chuppa

That night

the light

was switched off when we were alone

Five times he unwrapped me

That first night

Afterwards,

there was light outside

But inside

Like a toy with a broken spring

I was pushed down, again and again

I didn't bleed,

Someone else had done that to me
So with light outside, and seeing as I was still pure

I was again

Unwrapped

My skin
wore thin
there was nothing left
Finally
red blood fell
It made me impure
And I was untouchable

Later
On the doctor's couch
He said I was just torn
Still pure
After all.

Those were the first times
The last time was
more than a decade later
I finally said no
I cried and said no
**Explanatory Note:** In orthodox Judaism, menstrual bleeding renders a woman 'impure', and means that sexual contact is forbidden. Some also follow the 'tradition' of categorising a so-called virgin bride bleeding from a ruptured hymen in the same way. Genital bleeding from any other injury does not render a woman 'impure'.

**Yehudis Fletcher** is the founder of Nahamu, a think tank countering extremism in the Jewish community and an Independent Sexual Violence Adviser for Migdal Emunah. She is a student of Social Policy at Salford University.

---

To cite this poem: