

Wedding Night

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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



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Feminist Dissent

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.

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