

From: [David Kraemer](#)
To: [Covid Affiliate Archives](#)
Subject: Fwd: One Person's Response to Communal Fear 8.26.20
Date: Thursday, August 27, 2020 9:30:46 AM

Begin forwarded message:

From: Morris Allen <mojo210al@icloud.com>
Subject: One Person's Response to Communal Fear 8.26.20
Date: August 26, 2020 at 9:12:55 AM EDT
To: MOJO210AL <MOJO210AL@aol.com>

WAGON WHEEL CENSUS 8 Cars 3 Trucks 3 Walkers 2 People Fishing 1 Bicyclist
1 Dog Walker 1 Dog Runner

There is no questioning the fact that the Bedecken ceremony, which precedes a Jewish wedding, is a fully gendered ritual that attempts to speak to the presumed power differential in a classic Jewish marriage. So if you can get beyond that, and realize that I spent the vast portion of my adult life fighting to ensure that equality and shared leadership inside the Jewish community and for the Jewish people was always evident, you should continue reading. If you need to dismiss me or the construct entirely—have a very good day. For the rest of us, here is the story. The Bedecken ritual is one where one partner (traditionally a bride) has a veil placed over (t)he(i)r face prior to the start of the wedding ceremony underneath the Huppa. All sorts of explanations are attached to this ritual—but for the sake of brevity, let's just remind readers that its origins are traced by some to the moment when Rebekah first saw Isaac and placed a veil over her face, prior to their entering his deceased mother's tent. Regardless of its story of origin, there is no doubt that the image it presents is that one partner is "covered" and has less agency than the other partner to the proceedings. Indeed, even today in some Jewish circles, a veil has been replaced by a thick covering that totally suggests subservience and loss of any agency in controlling the decisions which are to unfold. But I digress...

For me, torn between the tradition and necessary change, I always explained the ritual in a different systemic construct. For most couples engaging in physical intimacy has not been an issue prior to their wedding day. (One day, when my memoirs are written, I will tell the story of the couple who wanted to follow the tradition of consummating their relationship (in my office no less) immediately following the wedding ceremony itself. Their single address seemed to suggest to me that the relationship had been consummated already). The Bedecken ceremony, I explained, is a sign that there are different categories in life and that crossing from one boundary to another is what the marriage ceremony itself is all about. For most couples today, on their wedding day, there is only the thin veiled veneer of the law—both religious and civil—that separates their identities. Prior to the ceremony they are legally single, after the ceremony they

are legally, religiously and hopefully emotionally coupled. All that separated them from that status was the thinness of a veil itself.

Much more to say, but I actually am not interested in talking about the wedding ceremony, as much as I am about the loss of boundaries in life as a result of ignoring boundaries. We are living in a world where no one is willing to reimagine the meaning of fixed boundaries in order to sustain a stable world. The fluidity of boundaries that for some is seen as a desired good for all, has led us to a moment in the American political world of disarray and sustained attack on appropriate separations that once allowed our democracy to flourish. The violation of healthy boundaries and the understanding that they exist, is something that now happens daily inside the executive branch of our government. Last night, we witnessed the total violation of ethical rules that define the difference between the personal and the professional, the political and policy realms of government. We are living in a moment when the political veils that have traditionally separated the running of the government from the political drives of the president are no longer evident. Naturalizing a citizen in the White House, using the grounds of the White House for blatant political purpose, and dragging an ally that is sorely in need of bi-partisan support into allowing it to be used for a partisan talk by the Secretary of State for a beautiful background shot of Holy Sites to the Abrahamic religions is nothing short of obscene. I get that the Bedecken is a gendered ritual. But for a couple, even that may already feel themselves a couple (“we don’t need no piece of paper from the city hall keeping us tied and true”—mostly false by the way), about to embark on a life together it underscores that a change in their relationship is about to occur. Sadly, having forsaken the rituals of the Presidency from the start upon assuming the office, ignoring the need to transform oneself from the status of candidate to the position of leader of the free world, the only ones being consummated are us. Morris