22 — Vayakhel-Pekudei: Holy Accounting

Jaz: Hey Kosher Queerlings. How do you feel about the word queerlings? One of my students came up with it, and I'm kinda into it, but uh, open to feedback! Anyway, just wanted to let you know that we recorded this episode pre-pandemic, so if you're listening and you're like, why are Jaz and Lulav talking as if everything is normal when there are plagues that have been lifted off the text the text of the Tanakh and brought into this year of 5780? It is because we were living in blissful ignorance of this particular horror that was loosed upon the world. We knew there were other horrors out there! The world is full of them! I think Lulav is even kinda into some lesbian horror podcast, which is weird to me, because it is SO not my genre. So, I hope this episode is a small reprieve for you from the outside world, and by that, I definitely mean the inside world, because please please, stay inside. Protect your immunocompromised friends, and if you do not have any, protect MY immunocompromised friends, and just, like, chill indoors and listen to this podcast that we have made just for you. Okay. Catch you in the episode.

Lulav: Hey, Jaz, would you say that I'm particularly suggestible?

Jaz: Maybe? Why?

Lulav: If you had to say, which one would you go with?

Jaz: Yes.

Lulav: Oh yeah, okay, I guess I am really suggestible. *(Jaz laughs)* The reason why I ask is because last Saturday, I was hanging out with a bunch of queer friends from shul and there was a new person who is a bassist and is a butch in the style of Shane McCutcheon, from *The L Word*. Anyway, she's forming a band and offhand, she was like, "Oh, hey, do you play drums?" And in that moment, I had like twenty cycles of "No, I don't play drums, but what if I could? What if I learned right now how to play drums?" *(Lulav laughs)*

Jaz: What a gay mood.

Lulav: Yeah, anyway, shout-out to Gabs. You are maybe listening, I don't know. *(Jaz laughs)* The Jewish end of cool, queer and Jewish things is that, apparently before I arrived, everyone had arrived that Gabs is in fact half Jewish and really wants to go to shul with us.

Jaz: Aww.

Lulav: So, that's fun.

Jaz: That's so lovely.

Lulav: Yeah, everybody's Jewish, and everybody's gay. *(Lulav laughs)*

Jaz: Yes, yes.

Lulav: Jaz, what cool, queer and Jewish things have happened with you this week?

Jaz: So, I got to go visit a couple of rabbinical schools as a prospective student recently, and one of them was a visit down to Philly to visit the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, and I loved that. And I consider it definitely to be a queer and Jewish experience in many ways, also because I walked in and I was like, friends! I know these friends! *(Lulav laughs)* Who are all trans friends — maybe, a couple cis queer friends — and one of whom I did not know but I had been getting dinner with my friend Jess the night before and Jess had very accurately described her partner, and I walked in and there was a person in short undercut, and arm in a sling and I was like, "Are you Ren?" And Ren was like, "Are you Jaz?" And then we got to hang out.

Lulav: That's amazing.

Jaz: Yeah.

Lulav: So are these other prospective students or people who are currently in rabbinical school

Jaz: They are people who are currently in rabbinical school.

Lulav: That is rad.

Jaz: It was rad. Also, I got to sit in on a student government meeting, and they were discussing like students making updates to the school's grievance policy and they were like, we should have the authority as students to ban together to work to make this school better for all of us. It was very sweet.

Lulav: Hmm.

Jaz: Also, I asked the Dean of Students about their pedagogy and she told me they believed that rabbis were vessels of Torah and that that's how they were approaching it and what it meant for them to be ordaining Reconstructionist rabbis was that they saw Judaism as Torah plus Jews, and they wanted to be as interested in the Jews as in the Judaism.

Lulav: Okay.

Jaz: So like part of what that means is stuff about — it's always been a feminist school, and now

it's being increasingly an all queer school. *(both laugh)* And with a lot of trans students there, and she was like, so we're trying to do other things too. Like prioritizing things like rabbis of color and rabbis from working class backgrounds.

Lulav: Nice.

Jaz: Yeah, they're the only rabbinical school that lets you have a partner who is not Jewish.

Lulav: Okay, like you get kicked out of other rabbinical schools if you don't break up with your goyish partner?

Jaz: Yes.

Lulav: That's wild.

Jaz: Yes.

Lulav: But also, hmm. But that's wild.

Jaz: *(laughs)* It's wild. I don't really know how they handle it if you have a Jewish partner and a non-Jewish partner. I don't' feel like they're very equipped, other places I mean.

Lulav: *(laughs)* I think that any amount of ham is enough to make a dish treif.

Jaz: Uh-huh.

Lulav: Not to compare partners to food, though, Tova, if you're listening, you're quite the dish.

Jaz: *(laughs)* Well, except that that's not true. There's also a pretty widespread interpretation that if there's less than one sixtieth — that's 60 — of your food has ham in it, the dish can still be kosher.

Lulav: Oh! Is that why some foods in the nutrition facts — which I read a lot of yesterday because I'm trying to cut out soy from my diet — why some nutrition facts will have less than one percent of?

Jaz: Somehow, I don't think it's because of halachah.

Lulav: That's, yeah.

Jaz: But it's the same line of reasoning.

Lulav: Are you ready to start the episode?

Jaz: I am.

[Brivele intro music]

06:12

Lulav: Welcome to Kosher Queers, a podcast with at least two Jews and generally more than three opinions. Each week, we bring you queer takes on Torah. They're Jaz.

Jaz: And she's Lulav.

Lulav: And today we're going to talk about Vayakhel-Pekudei.

Jaz: We sure are. It's our first double parsha episode. How do you feel about that?

Lulav: I feel great about that because most of it is a review of the last three parashot, so like, it's great that it's one episode instead of two.

Jaz: Yeah, I hear you on that for sure. Are you ready for a summary?

Lulav: I am.

Jaz: How much time do you want?

Lulav: Forty seconds?

Jaz: Ooh, okay, ready?

Lulav: This is the long version of my summary, to be clear.

Jaz: Okay. Ready? Set, go!

Lulav: Hey! Remember Shabbat, and don't light fires. Moshe relates the Mishkan plans to the people and a whole bunch of Israelites love the idea of this crafting project. Bezalel and Oholiab are the camp counselors and the booster club brings so many supplies that that Moshe actually has to turn them away. Not even counting fabric, they get a metric ton of gold, three and a half tons of silver, and two and a half tons of bronze. They make the things as requested just in case you were wondering. On the next Rosh Hashanah, Moshe assembles the ark of the covenant, just kind of out in the open, but then he brings it into the Mishkan, and that messenger cloud glides in, ready to guide the people. *(Timer rings)* Alright!

Jaz: That was so prompt!

(high five sound)

Lulav: That's me high fiving myself.

Jaz: Great, I would high five you if I were there. *(Lulav laughs)* Oh wait, you said that was the long version? What's the short version?

Lulav: Instead of telling you how much coinage metals they bring in, I think I would probably just cut out that line.

Jaz: Okay.

Lulav: They bring so many supplies that Moshe actually has to turn them away.

Jaz: Yeah.

Lulav: They make the things as requested. But I like numbers. I am the daughter of two accountants and so, I have magical number powers.

Jaz: I am very much not, *(Lulav laughs)* so it's good that one of us can do some number things. *(Lulav laughs)* My number skill sort of stops at basic gematria.

Lulav: Okay, see my number skills do not include basic gematria, so there you go

Jaz: Did you know that yud-hey-vav-hey has a value of 26? And "ahavah" has a value of 13? And that the shema is bracketed by two prayers about love, and it's because if you put the both of them together, it is like G-d?

Lulav: I'm hooting and hollering internally.

Jaz: Anyway, that is what I learned from my other rabbinical school visit.

Lulav: Oh, that's fun.

Jaz: Yeah, I had one good thing.

Lulav: Oh.

(Lulav and Jaz laugh)

Lulav: Amazing.

Jaz: Anyway, are you going to take us through the parsha?

Lulav: Yes, Moshe assembled all the congregation of the Israelites and he was like, six days shall work be done, but you can't work on Shabbat. You will die,and just a side note, don't kindle any fire in all your dwellings on the sabbath day, which is I think new information, right, Jaz?

Jaz: That you can't light any fires?

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: I think so. I don't remember if we got that earlier. They definitely been clear about the don't do any work, but this might be the first time that we get no fires specified. I can go check if you want.

Lulav: I like the interpretation that I just came up with, which is that this has been said several times, that you don't work one out of seven days, but people have been like, "hey, I know you can't work, but can you light a fire?" And this is Moshe coming back to it like, "No. Don't light fires. We decided."

Jaz: People asked questions, and then, Moshe figured it out.

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: It's like pre-Talmud Talmudics.

Lulav: Yeah, and we only have person credited with that information.

Jaz: Well, that's sometimes how the Talmud works too. One person will go and come back with an answer, it's just that other people will come and be like, "I don't know if I agree with that."

Lulav: Yeah, and we didn't have like Rav Yochanan here to jump in.

Jaz: Aww.

Lulav: I don't know which rabbi that is. I have no personal feelings about his feelings

Jaz: We like Yochanan —

Lulav: He's one of the gay ones, right?

Jaz: Because he's one of the gay ones, yeah. *(Jaz laughs)*

Lulav: Who's his boyfriend?

Jaz: Reish Lakish

Lulav: Nice!

Jaz: Bi bandit Reish Lakish

Lulav: *(laughs)* I love that. Talmud is good. Our ancestors are good. So, we continue on with him telling the gathered Israelites the plans for the Mishkan and these are the plans which we have received over the last three parashot.

Jaz: I have a specific thing about one of the plans because we've already told you about lots of them before so I don't feel like we need to go through it at length, but in 35:25, can you read what your translation has for that line for me?

Lulav: All the skillful women spun with their hands, and brought what they had spun in blue and purple and crimson yarns and fine linens.

Jaz: Okay, so yours has skillful and mine has skilled, but I looked at the Hebrew, and I don't like "skilled" as a translation there.

Lulav: Okay.

Jaz: So, I was looking at it and it is v'kol eshah hochmat lev[1], which is "and all the women who are wise of heart."

11:40

Lulav: Aww.

Jaz: And I was like, that's so lovely, where else does it show up? Where else do we hear about the phrase, the women who are wise at heart? And the answer is, nowhere. *(Lulav laughs)* It shows up twice in this parsha and nowhere else.

Lulav: Great.

Jaz: But, back in Ki Tasa, we had the super talented craftsman named Bezalel. Remember this — I was like, crafty trans people, here's a name for you! *(Lulav laughs)* Anyway, so G-d gives Bezalel a team of craftspeople back in that parsha and my translation rendered that phrase as "I have also granted skill to all who were skillful." The actual words back there is not "all who are

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[1] וְכָל־אִשָּׁה חַכְמַת־לֵב

skillful” — it’s kol hakhem lev[2]

Lulav: Nice.

Jaz: So all who are wise at heart. So, Sefaria’s translation of it is more like, “and in the hearts of all who are wise-hearted, I have placed wisdom,” which is lovely

Lulav: Nice.

Jaz: Anyway, so then we have here the wise-hearted women so this is all coming around to my larger point. If making the mishkan involves sewing a tent and doing carpentry and snipping things out of gold and all of that stuff, is the mishkan all made by some wise and crafty butch women?

Lulav: Amazing. I like to think that it’s made by some wise and crafty butch women and their femme wives.

Jaz: Beautiful. Okay. *(Both laugh)*

Lulav: Not to put like 1950s lesbian archetypes *(Jaz laughs)* onto our ancestors but... *(laughs)* yeah no, that’s great. I love that a lot. I also want to contrast wise of heart with the way Pharaoh was called “hard of heart.”

Jaz: Ooooh.

Lulav: Because I think that is directly related — maybe not etymologically but the idea that it is like hard of heart contrasted with wise of heart.

Jaz: That’s so lovely.

Lulav: Hard of tongue contrasted with wise of tongue maybe.

Jaz: Let me grab another reference text that this reminded me of. This is not a Jewish reference text. It’s just a gay reference text, give me a second.

Lulav: Amazing.

Jaz: Okay, so my friend Moira gave me a book which I really love but also have trouble saying out loud because of its title but I will link it in the show notes.

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[2] כָּל חֲכַם־לֵב

Lulav: Is it slur trouble —

Jaz: Yeah.

Lulav: Or tongue twister trouble?

Jaz: No.

Lulav: Oh okay.

Jaz: I genuinely don't know how to read any of the book out loud but I do love it. I'm just going to read this excerpt with a redacted in the middle.

Lulav: Okay.

Jaz: The context for this book is that it's written by a bunch of gay men during the AIDS crisis, and it's about finding a world in which we/they can all survive. And also it's like fiction and poetry and beautifully imaginative type of stuff. And there is sort of a bit in it about connections and relationships with women as well and there's one bit that goes like, "The strong women told the [redacted] that there are two important things to remember about the coming revolutions. The first is that we will get our asses kicked. The second is that we will win." *(Lulav laughs)*

Lulav: That's a good one.

Jaz: It's a good one.

Lulav: I like that

Jaz: So, I was just reminded of that with the wise-hearted women. Anyway, let's keep moving.

Lulav: So Moshe does some of that great delegation taught to him by our man Yitro and he says, "Bezalel has been filled with divine spirit and so has Oholiab. They're just gonna work in accordance with all that the Lord has commanded. They're going to help you out." And everybody gets brought together and Moshe's like, "huh. This is a lot of yarn. Oh my G-d — this is so much yarn." *(Jaz laughs)* "Oh! Wow. A lot of metals. Everybody, you're — you're good." *(Jaz laughs)* "Like, we already have more than we need."

Jaz: So what can the Torah tell us about doing group projects?

Lulav: So my angle on this is come up with a group project that gets everybody so hype that you have a surplus.

Jaz: Mmmm. I love that.

Lulav: What's your reading?

Jaz: I was just going to say that I have a follow-up / alternate framing of maybe the same question, which is, what can we learn from the fact that people were so eager to make things that eventually Moshe had to make an announcement that they had enough things? Like how do we generalize from that?

Lulav: *(sings)* Yai lai lai lai lai, Perchik Corner! turns out that like absent the strictures of capitalism, people actually enjoy doing things with each other.

Jaz: I like that. *(both laugh)*

Lulav: Also, I really hope that is the nigun I used last time. *(Jaz laughs)* It's been awhile. Again, did you have other things that you wanted to —

Jaz: I liked yours, that people are excited to make a thing, and if people are mobilized, they can be really excited. Also, I just think it's very sweet the text goes out of its way to say not just they got enough stuff, but that they got so much stuff that they could turn stuff down. It's like, hey, all of the resources we need are already here in our community. We just gotta make sure they get where they need to go.

Lulav: Yeah, that's really good. I love that there were just so many blue, crimson and purple sheep around that — *(Jaz laughs)* that — wait.

Jaz: Uh-huh. It's not like some of the talented women dyed them or anything?

Lulav: Yeah, no. They just found them like that. *(Jaz laughs)* So, is there anything that you want to talk about between here and like the end of 37?

Jaz: I have one specific question, but you can just kinda race through all of that and I'll ask it at the end.

17:08

Lulav: Yeah, so they build the Mishkan according to the instructions. Yeah?

Jaz: Okay, yeah, basically. (Lulav laughs) They go through all of the details of how they did it. I think our stuff from previous weeks about the way that they did it kind of holds up, the value of caring about specific patterns and stuff,

Lulav: Mm hmm.

Jaz: Okay. My question about the specifics in the text there is in lots of places in this parsha and in the description of like making things, we get a general they made, and in some places we get a specific "Bezalel made."

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: So is the Torah telling us something about correctly citing who has done what work? Or about distributed leadership and fractal ground-roots organizing, like the way adrienne maree brown talks about it? What does it mean that sometimes its like, all of the people made it and sometimes it's like, this one specific person made it?

Lulav: Yeah, I think this gets to, like, a Renaissance workshop kind of thing, where there's a teacher but the people actually making it are the students, so like, when it says Bezalel makes the things, everybody else is doing the handiwork, it's just that Bezalel is leading them in making some of the things, is my take on that.

Jaz: You think that's true for all of them? Why then would it distribute between some of them has a more general "they made it" and some of them has a more specific "he made it."

Lulav: Can you point out a part in these two chapters where it says "they made it?"

Jaz: Yeah! All over 36 it's like, and then the skilled among those engaged in the work. In 14 they make cloths of goats hair. They joined five of the cloths, they made 50 loops *(pages turning noise)*

Lulav: So for that one I have, "he also made curtains of goats hair."

Jaz: Ooh.

Lulav: And I'm not certain whether the divided attribution comes from translation or from the original text.

Jaz: Hmm. What do you have throughout like, 20 and 31 and stuff like that?

Lulav: Then he made the upright frames... *he* did this for all the friends of the Tabernacle...

Jaz: Whoa. Mine doesn't have that kind of attribution. Mine has "they" for all of those. Let me check the Hebrew. I didn't think to check.

Lulav: Thank you!

Jaz: Okay.

Lulav: And while you do that, I can say that 36:8 says that all those with skill among the workers made the Tabernacle with 10 curtains. But that's the one place in these two entire chapters where they-nouns are used for attribution.

Jaz: Mm. So, what I'm seeing in the Hebrew, and my Hebrew grammar's not amazing-amazing, but there aren't any pronouns in the Hebrew, it's just all done through conjugation.

Lulav: Oh, so like, "vimido" or something?

Jaz: But it's not even that. It doesn't have anything that direct. It's just vaya'ash et ha-korim — like, it's just like "and it was made," kind of. I think that's the type of vav + verb that we usually have begin a parsha, which is often translated as like, "and he spoke" or "and he moved" or whatever, and so it makes sense that yours would do it like that.

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: So I think that's the type of form it is. But when we have those at the beginnings of chapters, my translation doesn't do "and he does" because it's usually referring to G-d, and so they gender-neutral it.

Lulav: Okay. So the two places where direct attribution are made here are in 36:8 where it says "all those with skill among the workers made the Tabernacle with 10 curtains" and then 37:1, where it says "Bezalel made the ark of acacia wood."

Jaz: Right. And all of those other times, both following the workers and following that mention of Bezalel, they use this same format of "vaya'ash," which I assume is "and he made" or "and they made."

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: And my text just seems to be like, whatever our most recent referent is —

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: whether it's the workers, or Bezalel, we will attribute it to that person.

Lulav: Love that.

Jaz: Yeah.

Lulav: I prefer that. Cuz it makes sense that one man would make the ark of the covenant and the lamp-stand maybe, while everybody else is working on a huge weaving project.

Jaz: Right? Yeah, so I think that makes more sense to me, too.

21:32

Lulav: Yeah. *(laughs)* Cool, thank you for having the perspicacity to research that on the fly. So, yeah, that brings us to chapter 38, which I believe is the beginning of the Pekudei part of Vayakhel-Pekudei.

Jaz: Yes, you are correct.

Lulav: Great, so there's the altar of burnt offering and this seems to be conjugated back to Bezalel, with all the utensils... this man is doing so much!

Jaz: Well, it does say that he's got buddies now. Like he's got Oholiab and Ahisamach.

Lulav: Ohiolab, son of Ahisamach.

Jaz: Yeah.

Lulav: Of the tribe of Dan.

Jaz: Yeah. He's got a buddy. *(Lulav laughs)* Although I'm mostly trying to see if they're gay

Lulav: *(laughs)* Where would you look to find that out?

Jaz: Well, I'm looking in two places.

Lulav: Mm hmm.

Jaz: One of those places is in my heart.

Lulav: *(laughs)* Truly the source of Torah.

Jaz: But the other one was I was trying to look at the Hebrew to see what words it uses to say that Oholiab is at his side, see if that says anything interesting.

Lulav: Okay. I mean their hearts are being stirred so.

Jaz: Cute. Also, I was doing a teeny bit of research on this parsha because I wanted to see if anybody else had ever said anything interesting about it and a year or two ago, Ari Lev Fornari, who is the rabbi at Kol Tzedek down in Philly, did a dvar about it that said like, listen the whole thing was done with beautiful interior decorating. What do you mean? Of course they're flaming and gay men. *(Lulav laughs)* So, that too.

Lulav: Oh, man.

Jaz: Anyway, continue.

Lulav: So he makes the altar a burnt offering and all the utensils and also the basin of bronze with a stand of bronze from the mirrors of the women who served at the entrance of the tent of meeting, which is interesting because I don't think textually women who served at the entrance of the tent of meeting are mentioned anywhere else previous?

Jaz: Hmm.

Lulav: Are you familiar with that?

Jaz: Where are you?

Lulav: I'm at 38:8.

Jaz: Oh, so we're not in Pekudei yet.

Lulav: Oh! Yeah I didn't actually look at the actual delineation between the two. I just assumed because we had six full chapters.

Jaz: No, that would make a whole lot of sense, but in fact, Pekudei starts at 38:21 so very helpful.

Lulav: Oh no, that actually makes more sense. I don't know why the Christians cut it off in the middle between talking about things that Bezalel made and other things that Bezalel made.

Jaz: Yeah, anyway, so you're right. 38:8 is for the women who performed the tasks at the entrance of the tent of meeting and I don't know who those women are.

Lulav: Great. But yeah, that makes sense with the midrash that again we have not released. The forbidden midrash about mirrors.

Jaz: Oh, we should put it as bonus content.

Lulav: Yes, the problem is we have so much bonus content that we need to edit together.

Jaz: Yes, alright.

Lulav: We'll do it. It'll be done. So, these are the records of the mishkan, the mishkan of the covenant.

Jaz: Great, now we're in Pekudei.

Lulav: Yeah, specifically, I think the records are that all of the gold was a metric ton — 9, 994 kilograms of gold and like 3 and a half tons of silver and two and a half tons of bronze. It's so much metal.

Jaz: I have a question. Does yours actually list it in tons and kilograms?

Lulav: No, it does not. *(Jaz laughs)* I had to do those conversions myself as the daughter of accountants.

Jaz: Incredible.

Lulav: Yeah, so it measures them in talents and shekels.

Jaz: Yeah

Lulav: And the footnote here says a talent weighed about 34 kilograms or 75 pounds and a shekel weighed about 11.4 grams or .4 ounces.

Jaz: Hmm. That's also very funny because talents are not a measure used anymore but shekels is also just the name for the currency of the modern nation state of Israel.

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: So you could in theory be like, yeah, of course, I'm going to pay 730 shekels for a thing, but that's just like not very much. It's like $250 maybe.

Lulav: Oh, okay big spender over here! *(Lulav laughs)* Most currencies are no longer backed by specie, which means that there isn't a set amount of gold and silver and bronze that you're trading — whatever.

Jaz: Right, yes, we're not on a gold standard anymore. Is — yes.

Lulav: Yeah, I have feelings about monetary policy which are extremely amateur-ish.

Jaz: Tell me your feelings about monetary policy.

Lulav: So, when I was like 16, 18, 20, somewhere around there, I read a series by Neil Stevenson who is known for getting really into a couple special interests and then sharing them through writing and this particular series which I cannot remember the name of but the first book was *Quicksilver*, I think, this series involved a lot of monetary policy because this was when

England was going from pure coinage metals to a government-guaranteed ratio of coinage metals.

Jaz: Ooooh.

Lulav: That general trend of governments of like, whoa, we have way too many people, we can't actually trade using coins, so we need to introduce more coinage into the system to keep exchanges fluid, yeah, I don't really know where I'm going with this other than the fact that a modern Israeli shekel is going to be less valuable than an ancient Israeli shekel because it is not specie-backed even though we have greater supplies of coinage metals. It's like worth something because the government of Israel says it's worth something. Does that make sense?

Jaz: Sure, kind of.

Lulav: So I think they're bringing more than $250 worth of silver and stuff.

Jaz: I agree with you completely.

Lulav: Okay. *(Lulav laughs)*

Jaz: I have another question for you about the gold stuff, though.

Lulav: Uh-huh.

Jaz: Which is Bezalel and all of the craftswomen / I guess craftspeople made all of these things out of gold.

Lulav: Hmm mm.

Jaz: The other thing we know about gold in addition to it being really expensive is that it is a super soft metal, not very good for building with. I don't know if this is a thing you knew. I knew it because —

Lulav: No, I do.

Jaz: Okay, I just don't always know what's common knowledge and I thought maybe this was a thing that.

Lulav: Yeah, how did you know it? I'm very interested in that.

Jaz: Because I grew up in California and there was a gold rush in California.

Lulav: Oh. *(Lulav laughs)*

Jaz: And they tell you lots of things about gold, they're very proud of it. I didn't learn basically anything else about California history because I moved to Seattle in fifth grade.

Lulav: Wait, you lived in Seattle?

Jaz: What?

Lulav: I didn't know you lived in Seattle.

Jaz: Is this a genuine thing?

Lulav: Yeah, this is a genuine thing.

Jaz: I lived in Seattle from the time I was nine until the time I was seventeen. I basically consider it my hometown.

Lulav: Oh! Well dang!

Jaz: But, when I was a small child, the thing that I learned about California history is that we had a gold rush and I learned fun facts about gold.

Lulav: That's amazing.

Jaz: Which is perfectly fine for them to use to build the mishkan with in that it will not melt at any —

Lulav: Reasonable temperature.

Jaz: Like it won't melt in a normal fire, if you're just kind of building a fire.

Lulav: Mm hmm.

Jaz: But it will bend. Like you bite gold and it bends.

Lulav: Yeah, so some of this gold is coating acacia wood.

Jaz: Right.

Lulav: And I think that's the things that need actual structural integrity, but the utensils, like you can just make it out of gold probably.

Jaz: I guess so. *(Lulav laughs)* They're just not very good.

Lulav: No.

Jaz: Also, I'm just picturing this lamp-stand that's made all out of gold, and then you bump into it and it bends and spills fire places.

Lulav: Jaz?

Jaz: Yeah?

Lulav: How bendy do you think gold is? *(Lulav laughs)*

Jaz: I — no!

Lulav: This is a very big lamp-stand.

Jaz: I guess so. I'm just saying there's also lots of people, they're traveling in the desert, it will get bumped and bruised around!

Lulav: Oh yeah, fair. Yeah, you gotta, like, put it on a cart or something.

Jaz: Yeah.

Lulav: To make sure it doesn't fall over.

Jaz: Yeah.

Lulav: The thing is like if you personally bump into the lampstand, you're the one who falls over

Jaz: I feel like this is a pointed comment about the fact that I'm tiny. *(Jaz laughs)*

Lulav: Oh no! No, I would never.

Jaz: Anyway

Lulav: Short king rights! *(both laugh)*

Jaz: Anyway so continue.

Lulav: Yeah, where was I going?

Jaz: So they made a lot of things out of gold and spent a lot of money.

Lulav: No, they don't have money is the thing. This is a barter system.

Jaz: They weighed 29 talents and 730 shekels.

Lulav: Yeah, that's fair.

Jaz: Okay.

Lulav: It's a lot.

Jaz: It's a lot.

Lulav: It's literal tons of coinage metal.

Jaz: Yeah.

Lulav: And also they had blue, purple and crimson yarns, which we don't get an amount for and it talks about how they made the ephod like they were supposed to and they made the rosette of pure gold with that inscription Holy to the Eternal and fasten it on. That is way to much detail. Basically they just do all the vestments the way they're supposed to. *(page turning)*

Jaz: So I was trying to look into some interpretations. Did you have a meaning that you got from why we got this accounting, basically, of all of the things that they did? Why they accounted for it after having made it? After having told us how to make it anyway.

Lulav: Hmm. So for the accounting of quantity, I think that might be to lend credence to just how many Israelites there are supposed to be.

Jaz: Ooh.

Lulav: Like, you know, we only got a half shekel from all these Israelites, but look at how many of us there are.

Jaz: Lovely. Okay.

Lulav: In general, why they say it was done as it's supposed to be done, it seems like part of the holy writing is to not only say that you're going to do things but that you actually do things.

Jaz: Mm.

Lulav: Much like if you are an inexperienced game master and you're playing DnD, heaven forfend, your'e like, okay your characters will do something something, and then you just wait for the players to be like, yeah, we do something something something.

Jaz: Mm.

Lulav: It's not really necessary, but it's probably easier to remember when you are doing an oral history.

Jaz: Hmm. Is it do it twice.

Lulav: Yeah. Do you have perspective on this?

Jaz: So I looked it up, because I was like, there's gotta be some amount of reasoning, *(Lulav chuckles)* and there is a thing in Midrash Tanchumah, where they say, "Moses declared: I am aware that Israel is contentious; therefore, I shall give them an accounting of the construction of the Tabernacle. He began to make the accounting with them... He accounted for everything, the gold, the silver, and the brass." And they do another quote. "While he was doing the accounting and going over everything that had been made for inside the Sanctuary, he forgot, because they were not visible, the one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five shekels with which he had fashioned the hooks for the columns. He became distressed and said to himself: “Now the Israelites will grasp the opportunity to say that I have taken them.” He began to review every aspect of the work. The Holy One, blessed be G-d, thereupon opened his eyes and caused him to lift them upward, and he saw the hooks of the columns. He told them loudly that the one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five shekels of gold had been used for the hooks for the columns. Then the Israelites were satisfied."

Lulav: Jaz, I might actually cry. *(laughs)* Oh, I love that. What was the source for that?

Jaz: *(Laughs)* It is called Midrash Tanchumah. I'll link. I found it on Sefaria. Thank you Sefaria. *(Lulav laughs)* And I was juts like, why do we get these specific numbers, and it was because Moshe was like, nobody can say that I have stolen the money! I have used it! Here is everything that I have used it for. I believe in transparency! I know that the people are going to fight me so I'm going to be very meticulous and also I have quite literally taken there money and melted it don for hooks so I gotta tell them what I used it for.

Lulav: Good.

Jaz: And also he just literally couldn't remember and then G-d like, lifted his eyes, and he was like, aha! I used them for the hooks! I did use them! See! They're right there.

Lulav: *(laughs)* It's a very good midrash.

Jaz: It's so good.

Lulav: So yeah, to be clear, 40:16, Moshe did everything just had the Lord had commanded

him. And as he was recently told, in the first month of the second year, I'm not sure when they're counting that second year form, my guess is just they started receiving instructions and stuff after the first Rosh Hashanah and then it comes around to the second one and it's like, okay. Now we put it into practice.

Jaz: This is a really good question, because I don't know if it's supposed to be the second year as in the second year of our calendar, of like, 5780, or just like, the second year since they escaped from Egypt.

Lulav: Well, I'm almost certain it's not supposed to be of the Hebrew calendar.

Jaz: I think it's supposed to be since they escaped from Egypt.

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: Yeah.

Lulav: Especially since I'm pretty sure the Hebrew calendar was made after the canonization of the Torah.

Jaz: Yeah. And I think it's supposed to account for things since the beginning of the Torah, not just since the beginning of Egypt. Anyway, continue.

Lulav: So he puts the ark together outside. Like, they construct the tent for the mishkan and then he puts the ark together and then he takes it inside the mishkan and then sets up the altar of burnt offering and the basin and stuff.

Jaz: Mm hmm.

Lulav: So going to turn the questions back on you: what does the fact that the Holy of Holies is assembled in broad daylight tell you about where G-d is?

35:54

Jaz: Aww, I love that. I wasn't expecting to get any questions though, so I'm a little unprepared.

Lulav: Yeah, cuz it's your job and not mine. I'm overstepping my bounds.

Jaz: *(laughs)* Overturning established norms and order. Congratulations. *(Lulav laughs)* Anyways.

Lulav: That's a much better way to phrase it. *(Laughs)*

Jaz: Thanks. *(both laugh)* I like it. I think that if we read the specific accounting of this many talents and this many shekels to be about Moshe feeling like he has to engage in radical transparency with the people, then the building it outside in plain daylight where everybody can watch is also like, we are building it in full view of the community and anybody can see that that's what we're doing with the resources we took from you, is a nice way, considering that he is kind of the government, you know, insofar as there is one. To be like hey, the government is accountable to the people.

Lulav: Jaz, how do you pull these out so well? *(Jaz laughs)* That's a really good dvar on that.

Jaz: *(laughs)* Thank you! Also, I like that it's in broad daylight, because... I don't know. G-d is of the people, G-d is among the people, you're making this dwelling place specifically for G-d to live among the people.

Lulav: Yeah

Jaz: And it moves it from being just a thing that Moshe does up alone on the mountain to no, it happens among all of the people and they all have joint ownership of it and yeah.

Lulav: Yeah. Also I want to point out that what this means to me is G-d isn't the ark of the covenant. This thing that could be an idol is not the body of G-d. It is a point of contact that gets put behind curtains not because it is G-d but because the Kool-Aid man is both the juice and the glass.

Jaz: *(laughs)* Lovely.

Lulav: ... is where I'm going with that. *(laughs)*

Jaz: Yeah. No, I like the interpretation of, it's not G-d, it's a place to be in touch.

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: Your friend is not the phone, boomers, I am just using the phone to be in touch with my friend.

Lulav: Whoa.

Jaz: *(laughs)* Anyway, continue.

Lulav: The phone is the ark of the covenant... whatever. *(laughs)* Yeah, after all of this is set up, the mishkan is done exactly according to plan with radical transparency throughout. A cloud settles down upon the mishkan. Whenever the cloud was taken up from the mishkan, the Israelites would set out on each stage of their journey, but it if it just sat there, they didn't set out

until it left.

Jaz: Mm hmm.

Lulav: And fire was in the cloud by night.

Jaz: Yeah.

Lulav: Before the eyes of all the house of Israel at each stage of their journey. That's why I said in the summary that the messenger cloud settles in, because I think this is what we were promised in *(page turning noise)* a previous parsha that I am forgetting.

Jaz: Mm hmm. There is a thing in my Torah commentary that I don't know if you have too, because yours is a Christian one, that says "Chazak chazak venitchazek." And is that in yours? It's at the end of the parsha.

Lulav: What line would that be?

Jaz: It's not a line. *(page turning noise)* I think it's an indication that the book is over.

Lulav: Okay. *(laughs)* No, I definitely don't have that, though... lets see here. Okay, so the footnote here for 40:34-38 is titled "the climax of the book" and it describes some things that are going and relates them to earlier and later citations but interestingly, the last line is just "G-d is on the march."

Jaz: Fascinating.

Lulav: Which is a level of citation-less commentary that is unusual.

Jaz: Yeah, so I just checked, and chazak chazak venitchazek is at the end of Bereishit as well.

Lulav: Oh fun.

Jaz: So I think it's just marking the end of the book. So I don't know that exact translation that's typically given, but it's like, “strength, strength, and may you be strengthened?” Something like that. I don't remember why it's traditional to put at the end of the book. But I like it.

Lulav: Yeah. It seems like “and they lived happily ever after,” or the Spanish “y colorín, colorado; esta cuente *[sic]* se ha acabado.”

Jaz: I don't know what that means.

Lulav: It's like, the story continues but it's also at its end for now

Jaz: Oh, lovely. Okay, yeah, I think that that's right. Do you have any last thoughts about the cloud hovering and having fire in it and then not moving until it like lifts up?

Lulav: I have no idea what that's supposed to look like.

Jaz: I bet it looks cool.

Lulav: Oh, for sure! Now all of China knows you're here.

Jaz: Mmmmm. Okay.

Lulav: Okay.

40:34

Jaz: Um, welcome to Rating G-d's Writing, the segment where we pick two scales to rate the parsha on and do that.

Lulav: *(laughs)* I love how every time we make an ad hoc description of this segment, it's so much better than picking a script and staying with it.

Jaz: *(laughs)* We have scripts for everything else, it's fine.

Lulav: *(laughs)* Yeah, so, Jaz?

Jaz: Yes.

Lulav: Out of 2 artisans who are in love, how many artisans would you rate this parsha?

Jaz: I would rate this parsha five uncredited women artists —

Lulav: Okay.

Jaz: — who are also in love.

Lulav: Okay.

Jaz: *(laughs)* Out of the 25ish women artisans who are also there and not credited because we don't get a specific number for how many there are —

Lulav: Okay.

Jaz: Because I'm not super into this parsha. I think there's valuable stuff here, but I don't know if there's enough valuable stuff to justify the length of it.

Lulav: Are you similarly glad that we are taking this two parashot at a one episode run?

Jaz: I sure am, yeah. *(Lulav laughs)* I just kind of feel like there is valuable stuff in here —

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: But we got a lot of that valuable stuff in the other parashot.

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: Listen, I still love the holy crafting aspect of it, I really really do, but there's not like a lot of new holy crafting for me?

Lulav: Right.

Jaz: Like, they're making the same thing. It's not even like they're making a new thing to be excited about so that's my one thought about it. Lots of the details are good, but you kind of have to go into the details.

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: Yeah. Out of 1,775 shekels, what would you rate this parsha?

Lulav: Shekels of what?

Jaz: Silver.

Lulav: Okay, I would rate this parsha 200 shekels but I forgot that 1575 shekels have been cast into hooks. *(Jaz laughs)* Because there are like three, maybe four new details across this two parshot which they are genuinely interesting details. I love accounting so yeah 200 shekels of silver visible because there are some interesting things but I just don't care about a lot of it. *(laughs)* It's information that we've already received and it's not phrased in a particularly novel way.

Jaz: Yeah, okay, let's move into Continuity Corner. So we got a piece of listener mail about Mishpatim. So our listener said that ze had taken an entire course about various types of Jewish literature and spent some time on the question of the thief in the night, which we were talking about.

Lulav: With Cassidy, right?

Jaz: Yeah! Listeners, in case you like missed that one, 1) go back and listen, it was fun, but 2) there was this question, just to catch you up, of like if a burglar is breaking in and is struck and killed by the person living in the house, it's not considered an act of murder but if the sun has risen when that's happening or it's in daylight, then it is still considered an act of murder.

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: So our listener and hir chevrusa had been discussing it and it was clear that you may not chase after the burglar and hurt them and also it is only when the thing happens at night. So the commentary here is — our rabbis' thoughts on this passage were that this where the permissibly of killing in self-defense is derived from the written Torah. Personally, I feel troubled by this idea given how the Stand Your Ground laws are interpreted in the US court system. I do, however, appreciate that as how I see it as someone who is no longer in your personal domain, that killing a thief is murder. I think it's important that halachah to forbid this sort of revenge explicitly.

Lulav: Hmm, yeah. Like you can't hunt down a thief.

Jaz: Yeah. I've also read from Tosofos specifically — suggests that had this thief gone in the front door instead of like tunneling in, it is expected that he would flee out the same entrance and for that reason it would be considered murder. I don't agree with this line of reasoning but it's really interesting to look at the commentary and response around it. A lot of them make assumptions about what the thief's plans and contingencies are.

Lulav: Mm hmm.

Jaz: A very common assumption by many of the sages and rabbis is that thief who goes in the night is prepared to kill whereas one who goes in the daylight is not. Rabbeinu Chananel, an 11th century Tunisian rabbi, says, according to translation the fact that thief operated at night is prima facie evidence that he posed a death threat to his potential victim and this other person, the Siftei Chachamim, from the 17th and 18th century said that killing is only permitted at a certain time while the breaking in is happening, not while the thief is found.

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: Okay, so that's a lot of different things but they all seem to illuminate a sort of — we don't agree with it still but at least the rabbis did have this concept of really it has to be very genuinely about saving your life.

Lulav: Yeah, it's not Stand Your Ground, it's you don't get in trouble if you saved your life.

Jaz: Yeah, I think that is the more generous reading.

Lulav: *(laughs)* Yeah

Jaz: Yeah, so. Anyway, thank you for writing in.

Lulav: Jaz, can you take us to the close?

Jaz: Thank you for listening to Kosher Queers. If you like what you've heard, you can support us on Patreon at patreon.com/kosherqueers which will give you bonus content and help us keep making this for you. You can also follow us on Twitter @kosherqueers, or like us on Facebook at Kosher Queers, or email us your questions, comments, concerns and assorted thoughts on our parsha at kosherqueers@gmail.com. And please do spread the word about our podcast. Our artwork is by the talented Lior Gross. Our music is courtesy of the fabulous band Brivele, whose work you can find on Bandcamp. Go buy their album, they're great. Our sound production this week is done by our excellent audio editor Ezra Faust.

Lulav: Our full transcripts, as with every episode, are done by DiCo and Jaz. And definitely accessible through the Buzzsprout website.

Jaz: I'm Jaz Twersky and you can find me @WordNerdKnitter on Twitter. I recorded this audio on the traditional lands of the Lenape people.

Lulav: I am Lulav Arnow and you can find me @spacetrucksix on Twitter, or yell at me @palmliker! I recorded this audio on the traditional lands of the Wahpékute and Anishinaabeg.

Jaz: Have a lovely queer Jewish day
[Brivele outro music]

Jaz: This week's gender is: nibling.

Lulav: This week's pronouns are: co and cos