

23 — Vayikra: Honey & Salt and Fix your Faults

Content notes: *this episode does contain multiple references to animal sacrifice and blood.*

Lulav: Hey Jaz, has anything cool, or queer, or Jewish happened to you recently?

Jaz: Yeah! A couple cool things have happened to me recently in that realm. The first one is it's been Purim and for Purim, I got a chance to do a costume.

Lulav: Mm-hmm.

Jaz: And the day before at work, we'd all been discussing different costumes, and we were like maybe this first day we'll make it a sports themed one, because there's a few different opportunities for us to dress up, and the next day, without telling of our any coworkers (Lulav laughs), DiCo and I came in in costumes - we'd been planning this for several weeks —

Lulav: Okay.

Jaz: And we dressed up as each other.

Lulav: YES. Yes!!

(Jaz and Lulav laugh)

Lulav: That sounds amazing.

Jaz: It was amazing. And also —

Lulav: Were you like role playing each other?

Jaz: Not really, I —

Lulav: Okay.

Jaz: *(Laughs)* It was one of those things where — you know — we are two trans people at the same place of employment and cis people frequently mix us up —

Lulav: Oh, boy.

Jaz: And we were like, might as well take advantage of it. *(Lulav laughs)* You get one day where it's cool to mix us up and fine. And also to take advantage of the fact that like you looked at us and you were like, "why did they look weird today?" We have very radically different styles —

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: Like enough so that you could look at us and be like, neither of them look right, why do you look like that?

Lulav: So you shouldn't be mixing us up! *(Lulav laughs)*

Jaz: So you shouldn't be mixing us up! Anyway, that was truly delightful. I got DiCo's rugby jersey and hat from the old school that he used to teach at, um, and like a sweatshirt that said DiCo on it on the back.

Lulav: Aww

Jaz: And DiCo does this thing, like from *Fun Home* *(Lulav laughs)*, though he says it's not from that where he walks away with keys jangling on his belt all of the time.

Lulav: Okay. Uh-huh?

Jaz: And so I jangled all day, anyway. *(Lulav laughs)* He just wore like three different knitted accessories.

Lulav: Oh good.

Jaz: *(laughs)* And I have a shirt that my parents gave to me that's like, my book shirt, I look like a librarian — *(Lulav laughs)* several people commented on it — and some bi pride accessories, and earrings! Because I wear earrings all of the time.

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: DiCo never wears earrings.

Lulav: Does he even have pierced ears?

Jaz: Yes, but no. *(Lulav laughs)* I think at one point he had pierced ears and hasn't worn earrings in at least a solid decade.

Lulav: Good.

Jaz: And got like clip-on earrings.

Lulav: Ah, okay.

Jaz: And sent them to me beforehand and was like, should I get these? And they were like these dangly rainbow-y metallic clip-on things and I was like —

Lulav: The answer's yes, right? Yes. *(Lulav laughs)*

Jaz: Yeah, yeah. And I was like, I feel a little called out by this choice but also absolutely these are the ones you should get.

Lulav: So, important question.

Jaz: Yeah?

Lulav: Do either of you wear sweater vests?

Jaz: He does.

Lulav: Okay, that's what I thought cuz like, my mental picture of DiCo involves sweater vests. *(Jaz laughs)* Rather than like rugby jerseys and stuff

Jaz: Yeah, you are entirely correct.

Lulav: That's good to know. You're much more of, like, a cardigan person.

Jaz: Yeah.

Lulav: And like, plaid short-sleeved button downs, right?

Jaz: Yup. Yeah. *(Lulav laughs)* Also it was very funny because occasionally if people, like, didn't quite guess what we were right away, they would make guesses. And so we got really good assessments of, what do people think we look like?

Lulav: *(laughs)* Oh G-d!

Jaz: So do you want to guess what their thoughts were about what we were dressing up as?

Lulav: Um, okay, a grandpa who used to do drag, for DiCo. *(Jaz laughs)* Um, and now we're switching over to you dressed as DiCo... "wearing a rugby jersey", um...

Jaz: Not a rugby jersey, but like a, like a sh—

Lulav: Oh, okay. Because I was about to say somebody who went to Smith College.

Jaz: *(Jaz laughs)* Honestly?!

Lulav: The one person I know from Smith is a rugby player.

Jaz: That's really fair. And honestly, that probably is more accurate. *(Lulav laughs)* Not that he went to Smith, but like, same difference. But, no, DiCo got librarian.

Lulav: Okay.

Jaz: Which is real fair.

Lulav: Yeah, yeah, that counts.

Jaz: I am very down to give off gay librarian vibes.

Lulav: It's not like it's your brand or anything.

Jaz: Nope. *(Lulav laughs)*

Jaz: And two different people asked me if I was dressed as a straight dude. *(Jaz laughs)*

Lulav: Oh! Oh! Wow.

Jaz: Both of us were so wounded. *(Both laugh)*

Lulav: Did that have anything to do with your tweet about straightening your hair and grumping about how that's the only part of you that's straight?

Jaz: Yes!

Lulav: Okay. *(laughs)*

Jaz: Like I went into this costume and I have very curly hair and DiCo has very straight hair and I committed to the bit.

Lulav: *(laughs)* That's so good.

Jaz: Yeah.

Lulav: Thank you for this blessing.

Jaz: *(laughs)* Lulav, did anything cool and queer and Jewish happen to you this week?

Lulav: Well, a friend asked me kind of noncommittally if I wanted to kiss and, like...just kind of occasionally do amorous friend-dates?

Jaz: Mmm.

Lulav: And I was like, "yeah, that's exactly what I want," and I talked to my partner about it, and we figured out feelings and things, and I came back to them and I was like, "yeah, sounds good". And this person is a shul friend, so: queer, Jewish, and pretty cool.

Jaz: Awww.

Lulav: Shout out to Thryn.

Jaz: That's so lovely

Lulav: Yeah. We're also both board members on the community organization so that's fun.

Jaz: Awww.

Lulav: I love to kvetch about sixty year olds who don't understand trans people.

Jaz: *(laughs)* Yeah, yeah.

Lulav: So how would you feel about getting this episode started?

Jaz: Actually, could I throw in another small thing that happened?

Lulav: Yes please.

Jaz: Because I feel really good about it. Which is that I had a little gathering of friends, and it's the first havdalah that I've had in my house since my housewarming, and just because I've been having kind of a time with some things in my personal life.

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: I asked friends to like, come and create a space where we could have dinner and do havdalah and sing songs and also I could be sad and around my friends *(Lulav gasps)*, and like ten of my friends came and it was really, really lovely and I got to sing with them all and they all brought food...Like, it is technically a Jewish event and it isn't technically a queer event except that I invited *my* friends —

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: So everybody in the room was queer, or Jewish, or overwhelmingly, both of those things.

Lulav: You had a minyan of friends to help you grieve, which is so cool.

Jaz: I did, and it was really, really nice, and some of them said really nice and heartwarming things to me, and everybody was just very lovely and it just really did my heart good, so.

Lulav: Yeah, that's really good, thank you for sharing that.

Jaz: Yeah, I recommend telling friends what you want them to do for you so that they can show up and hug you.

Lulav: Right? If there's nothing else you get from this portion of the episode, it's that you just gotta tell your friends what you want.

Jaz: Yeah, yeah. Oh we should probably say before we really get started, there's a lot in here about sacrifices and not all of the things we're going to say are gory and bloody, but some of them might be, so — heads up.

7:08

[Brivele intro music]

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 Vayikra.

Jaz: I was just going to say as our transition sentence (*Lulav giggles*) that also sometimes ritual can be good which is good because this whole parsha is about ritual and sometimes maybe it can be good? Hopefully.

Lulav: We'll see.

Jaz: We'll see.

Lulav: I think part of this — if you got any anger issues you need to work out, and you're also a priest, that might be fun.

(Jaz laughs)

Lulav: That might be fun. How many seconds do you want on the short summary, Jaz?

Jaz: Oh, I don't know, like 30?

Lulav: Okay, that sounds great. 3 - 2 - 1 - go

Jaz: Make offerings! Big ones, and little ones. Ones of goats, ones from birds, and ones of flour. Ones for well-being, and ones to apologize. Ones for individual wrong-doing, and ones for communal wrong-doing. One from the people, and ones from the leaders. Ones from the

rich, and ones from the poor. Bring all kinds of offerings, and follow a specific order when you do so, um, so that you're following the steps for a proper old-fashioned apology to G-d, who will then be chill with you. Done.

Lulav: Yeah. Yeah. Five seconds short, nice

Jaz: Okay, great!

Lulav: That was a good litany, kind of like when you're doing the Mourner's Kaddish, and you get all the conjunctions in order?

Jaz: Hmm

Lulav: That was kind of the meter of your summary today.

Jaz: Aww

Lulav: Hey, Jaz, what book are we in?

Jaz: It's our first parsha from Vayikra, and it's called "Vayikra",

(Lulav laughs)

Jaz: Which is delightful.

Lulav: Continuing a trend.

Jaz: So we've talked about this already I think but the books are named differently in English and in Hebrew. Like Vayikra does not translate to Leviticus. Leviticus I think means something to do with the establishing of the Levite priesthood

Lulav: Yeah, concerning the Levites, basically

Jaz: But Vayikra is like: and it was said. This is more about the focus being on G-d speaking to Moses or the people. Like this one starts "Vayikra el-Moshe" and so vayikra is more like sayings

Lulav: Did I ever tell you — so Isabel Bard, @MyNameisNotBard on Twitter, does these deep readings of the Parsha every week, and has done so for about two years now? And in one portion, which I don't think was Vayikra, I think it was much earlier...she asked, "is this the first time that God had kra'ed?"

Jaz: Ooooh

Lulav: And that phrase just stuck in my head. So everytime I see the title of this book or of this parsha, I'm just like, is this the first time that God has kra'ed?

Jaz: Hmmmm..that's delightful. My association with "kra" is I think as one of the sources of where you can derive things from in the Talmud?

Lulav: Hmm

Jaz: That kra is a place — it's a type of proof basically, you can derive something from kra

Lulav: Can you elaborate on that at all?

Jaz: Give me a second, I don't have my notes in front of me. And as I'm saying this, I realize I should double check to make sure it's the same word.

(Lulav laughs)

Jaz: But the idea being in the Talmud there's different ways you can derive something. You can say, for example, it's from minhag (it's from the customs around you) or it's from takanah, which is like the rabbis declared a thing, or you can say it's from kra, which I think is from the text itself, like you're deriving it from Torah and just reading it a certain way.

Lulav: Yeah, according to Svara, it's a verse in the Torah, which founding rabbis called "kra" and which legal rabbis call midrash

Jaz: Yeah, so, there you go.

Lulav: Cool.

Jaz: Anyway, so, vayikra — G-d is saying to Moses to give a bunch of instructions to the whole Israelite people. It starts with an offering of cattle.

Lulav: Speaking of gory and bloody!

Jaz: It'll be slaughtered and you'll use the blood as the offering on the altar and then also there will be other parts of it that will be washed with water and lots of it will be cut up and then turned into smoke.

Lulav: Mhm.

Jaz: And then there is sort of a similar process if it's sheep or goats, and then a similar process if it's birds because birds are a little bit different — like they just don't have the same body parts, you do it a little bit differently.

Lulav: Yeah. And-

Jaz: Which includes —

Lulav: You go.

Jaz: (with great trepidation) Okay...

(Lulav laughs)

Jaz: Uh, which includes that the priest shall tear it open by its wings or feathers without severing it and turn it into smoke upon the altar.

Lulav: Yeah, which I'm interpreting as literally just don't use a knife, just rip the bird apart.

Jaz: Uh, yeah.

Lulav: Wild.

Jaz: Because Vayikra is so laws-driven, I looked at some commentaries on it and I found a thing from Rashi about this passage.

Lulav: Mm hmm

Jaz: Rashi notes that it's often translated as "wings" but it's really "feathers" and then — (*laughs*) I'm just going to read you this English translation of Rashi.

Lulav: Uh huh

Jaz: It says, "But surely you will not find even a common sort of man who can smell the odor of burnt feathers without being disgusted with it! Why then do the Scriptures say that it shall be offered with the feathers? In order that the altar should appear full-up, as it were, and adorned with the sacrifice of the poor. Since the bird with its feathers makes a finer show than the bird without them."

Lulav: Word.

(Jaz laughs)

Lulav: Do feathers really smell that bad?

Jaz: Yeah, they really do

<siren in the background>

Lulav: Oh rough. Do you want to wait for the siren to pass?

Jaz: And then the last thing after the bird is an offering of flour with oil.

Lulav: Oh, before we get there:

Jaz: Yeah?

Lulav: Is there a reason that birds are included as a possible sacrifice but not mentioned in the first line? I don't know if it's the same in your translation but mine says, "When any of you bring an offering of livestock to Hashem, you shall bring your offering from the herd or from the flock." And then it goes down to detail, a burnt offering from the herd, a burnt offering from the flock, and a burnt offering of birds.

Jaz: Well, a burnt offering of flour isn't included either in that intro sentence. Some of the reading that I was doing suggested basically that the order here was about an ordering of fanciness and prestige — that if you can afford to, you should be offering, like, a mammal?

(Lulav laughs)

Jaz: And if you can't afford to, then,

Lulav: You get turtle doves or pigeons, right?

Jaz: Yeah, and if you can't afford that, then you do flour with oil.

Lulav: Oh, interesting.

Jaz: Yeah, I believe that it is the way it is organized.

Lulav: It makes sense at the very least that among the meats, it makes sense that the priests would be like, "bring us a bull or bring us a ram, and I guess, (snootily) if you're too poor, bring us a pigeon".

Jaz: Well, the thing that I was looking for was a specific phrase here, which is translated in mine as "a pleasing odor to the Eternal" which we hear at the end of the entry for cattle and then we hear that again at the end of the entry for a goat or a sheep, and then we hear again at the end of a entry for a pigeon.

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: The idea being that no matter the size of your offering, it's the same sort of symbol — that you're doing and getting the same kind of response from G-d no matter what your means are.

Lulav: Mhm. Yeah!

Jaz: So then we have the grain offering. They note here for the first time that some of it are going to be for Aaron and his sons to eat.

Lulav: Mhm. And they give sort of these specific instructions that no leaven or honey may be turned into smoke as an offering. You can bring them as an offering but they won't be burnt.

Lulav: So why are leaven and fruit syrup disallowed? I want to be clear that this is not bee juice. This is like, dates and grapes that have been squeezed for their sugars.

Jaz: Uh, yes. (*Lulav chuckles*) Specifically probably dates.

Lulav: Mm hmm.

Jaz: And... I don't know. Do you have a theory?

Lulav: Um... yeah, I guess. So a bit later it's talking about, like, salt of consecration or s — Here we go, "salt of the covenant", in 2:13.

Jaz: Mhm.

Lulav: Like, salt is offered because it's good and then there's a footnote that says since it's a preservative, it symbolized the perpetuity of the covenant? And I think, in contrast to that, leaven makes something like... full of air pockets, and um... gives it the possibility of getting moldy, you know?

Jaz: Mm hmm.

Lulav: Like bread is something temporal but matzah is forever. (*Lulav laughs*)

Jaz: Hmhmhmhmhm.

Lulav: So I that might be part of it or it might be that leaven is a very alive thing so whereas unleavened bread is generally going to be the same flat cracker, leavened bread is going to have all of these bumps and stuff,

J; Hmm

Lulav: And maybe that's not as holy?

Jaz: There's a note here from the Daat Zekenim that suggests that it's because offerings had to be done with the salt and you wouldn't want to combine either leavened things or honey with salt — which is a very funny note to me.

Lulav: Because it won't taste good?

Jaz: I — I think so.

Lulav: Oh that's literally it, huh. Okay.

Jaz: Can you imagine?

Lulav: Yeah, I love salt. Not to be transfeminine about it but...

(both laugh)

Jaz: Okay, but, salt like... in your fruit juice?

Lulav: Hold on — Wait, no, I don't have — I was going to get some bee juice, (*Jaz laughs*) but what I would really need is fruit juice.

Jaz: All I'm saying — even if you put it in your literal honey, I can't — why would you put salt and —?

Lulav: Challenge accepted! I'll be back.

Jaz: Noooooooooo.

(Lulav laughs as she retreats into the distance)

<musical interlude>

Jaz: While Lulav is gone, gentle listeners, I'm just gonna tell you that I think all of this stuff here is wild. Wild, wild. Look at it. It has all this stuff about not eating honey and not eating leavened things, and imagine you have bread and the thing you really really want to do is your bread is burn it up and the priests say, "No, you may not burn the bread," and then, they probably take it and eat it themselves. I don't know how I feel about this.

Lulav: Hi, it's me, Lulav. I have a piece of oatmeal bread, some honey — oh that's kind of fused shut — there we go — are you still around, Jaz?

Jaz: I am definitely still around.

Lulav: Can you hear how much salt I'm grinding on here?

(Lulav audibly grinds some salt)

Jaz: I sure can.

Lulav: It's gonna be great. I'm not going to regret this in the slightest.

Jaz: Have I ever told you the story of when I was like a little child and I had a friend over and I had made chocolate pudding with my parents and... this friend was trying to boast about something and the thing that they ended up boasting about — in the way of like small children — was what wild things they could put in their chocolate pudding and still think that it tasted good.

Lulav: Oh yeah.

Jaz: And they were like, “here’s the parmesan cheese and I eat it with parmesan cheese, and with salt, and with sugar,” and then put a bunch of parmesan cheese and salt and sugar in my chocolate pudding and *ruined* my chocolate pudding!

Lulav: Oh the kid put that in *your* chocolate pudding?

Jaz: I mean, she put it in *her* chocolate pudding but then it was ruined and terrible and she ate, like, only a little bit of it only to prove that she could do it and then stopped eating it because it tasted bad.

Lulav: Okay so the verdict is I’m eating some leavened bread and some honey which admittedly is bee juice and not fruit juice and also a whole bunch of table salt and it tastes great.

(Jaz laughs)

Lulav: I ate the whole thing; didn’t even wince once.

Jaz: That’s beautiful.

Lulav: Thank you.

Jaz: You have undone the Torah with science.

(Lulav laughs)

Lulav: Anyway the more important half —

Jaz: I guess you haven’t undone the Torah, you’ve undone this particular biblical commentator who theorized it.

(Lulav laughs)

Jaz: You were like, “absolutely not, Daat Zekenim.” great minds think alike?

Lulav: So the other half of this — which is perhaps more important — is, like, what does the disallowal of lemons and fruit syrup in grain offerings to Hashem say about the writers’ conception of Hashem?

Jaz: Ooooh.

Lulav: Or does it say anything?

Jaz: Well I do think there's this thing about, like, pleasing odor. Which, I wonder if there's a little bit of a — maybe that wouldn't create a pleasing odor for G-d? Which: confusing, because it creates a pleasing taste *to you* but — (*laughs*)

Lulav: Things G-d likes: Burning feathers. Things G-d does not like: the *delicious* dish of salt and honey on bread.

Jaz: So G-d has weird taste buds.

(Lulav laughs)

Jaz: Smell-buds? That's not how that works.

Lulav: You know what? It is now.

(Jaz laughs)

Lulav: I have two STEM degrees, and you're right.

(Jaz laughs)

Jaz: And therefore the takeaway is that when you want to create something for someone because you want to do something nice for them, you give them something that they like, not something that you would like.

Lulav: Mmm. Okay. Huh. Love that. Yet again you pull something nice out of me going in a very fatalist "It's all a hoax" direction.

Jaz: Also I appreciate that we created a conception of a divine such that we were like, "You know the things that we really like to eat? G-d won't like those. We should eat them."

Lulav: Huh. Does this mean that G-d is not on spironolactone?

Jaz: Aww. I think that G-d should be.

(both laugh)

Lulav: You're right. G-d's already chuggin' that pickle juice.

Jaz: Yeah.

Lulav: And doesn't need any more sodium, okay.

Jaz: No, that's not the takeaway, because, (*Lulav laughs*) G-d was clear about not wanting leavened things and not wanting honey. G-d absolutely does want salt. That's the next line: "You shall season your every offering of meal with salt."

Lulav: That's true. Okay. (*Jaz laughs*) So G-d is on a rather high dose of spironolactone, which she should actually come down from and add a little bit of estradiol. It gets better feminizing effects and less of the side eff- Anyway. Yes? Hi.

Jaz: I was just going to offer an explanation for our two cis listeners.

(Lulav laughs)

Lulav: Come on, it's like three.

(Jaz laughs)

Jaz: That spiro makes you want salt. That's the whole thing that I was gonna say.

Lulav: Yes, it's a potassium-sparing diuretic, which means it makes all of the salts come out of you except for potassium, and as a side effect, it also blocks testosterone.

Jaz: Yeah, anyway

Lulav: Medical science is amazing. (*Jaz laughs*) Jaz, what happens next?

Jaz: Okay, so there is this note: you can also bring an offering of first fruits to G-d — and they give us the pretty specific directions of which fruits. You burn some of that and then...some of it not. And then, um... before we go on to the next bit, just a side note that I did check and the word that they're using to be "first fruits" comes up also in the Torah in the section describing Cain and Abel.

Lulav: Oh

Jaz: That Abel brings the first... in this case, not fruits but the first of his flock as a sacrifice

Lulav: But like the word "first" there is... ?

Jaz: It's not "first". Because "first" would be, like, "rishon", and this is a word that specifically seems to be used for first or best sacrifices.

Lulav: Is it like "choice"? The choicest?

Jaz: Kind of. It's not an adjective. It's a noun that connotes both parts. So like here it's the bekhurim. I believe in the Cain and Abel one, it's bekhorot.

Lulav: Oh like bekhor?

Jaz: Yeah. It's the first.

Lulav: Fun!

Jaz: Yeah. The first and best, kind of is the implication there.

Lulav: So, well-being sacrifices.

Jaz: Right, so you can have sacrifices for well-being and those you can have different types of things that you sacrifice: cattle, or goats, or... nope, cattle or goats.

(Lulav laughs)

Jaz: You can sacrifice cattle or goats, with very specific ways in particular of the fat of the animal,

Lulav: Mhm.

Jaz: Which means that we get this delightful sentence that says "All fat is the Eternal's." (*Lulav snort laughs*) It is a law for all time. And just a note, because it continues to inform current kashrut, is that you must not eat any fat or any blood, and the "any blood" thing does come up again.

Lulav: Yeah! So, wait. Don't we eat fat?

Jaz: We sure do. We don't eat blood.

Lulav: Okay, so the blood thing we kept, the fat thing we didn't?

Jaz: Y-yeah?

Lulav: Also what amount of fat is too much withheld?

Jaz: What?

Lulav: Cause like, I don't know if you've ever made chicken, but there's some fat on there and it's really hard to get it all off without also wasting a bunch of meat.

Jaz: Mm hmm.

Lulav: So, do you have to cut out all the fat or is it just like make a good faith effort or... ?

Jaz: That's a good question. It appears to be from certain parts of the body because we have up here this thing about the fat that covers the entrails and down here this thing about the fat that is on the kidneys and I think actually probably it's on parts of the animal that are, like, difficult and tricky for people to eat unless you prepare it very carefully.

Lulav: Okay so when it says “All fat is the LORD’s”, it’s like specifically the fat from the parts that it’s talking about, not like literally all fat?

Jaz: I think so.

Lulav: Okay, that tracks, which would explain why we eat fat.

Jaz: Yeah.

Lulav: Cuz like schmaltz — chicken fat is an important part of ashkie cooking, I think.

Jaz: Definitely a thing we do. Yeah.

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: Okay and then there’s this bit about when a person unwittingly incurs guilt and the type of sacrifices you do for that one. A priest helps you out, you do an offering, the priest dips his finger in the blood and sprinkles the blood seven times before G-d on the altar, and then if it’s the community leadership of Israel that has erred and the matter escapes the notice of the congregation, so they do any of the things which by G-d’s commandments ought not to be done and they realize guilt — so like their leader told them to do something and they did it and the leader was wrong and the people figured it out — then they do an offering.

Lulav: Mhm. I also want to point out that specifically the one with the dripping of blood that you were first talking about?

Jaz: Mhm.

Lulav: Is if it is anointed- an anointed priest who sins. So this is like a whole section about people sinning unintentionally and that’s specifically if a priest does it.

Jaz: Right, you’re correct.

Lulav: Cool.

Jaz: But they also do that same, (*Lulav concurs*) uh, dipping the finger in the blood and sprinkling it seven times in the second case where the leader was wrong and the people figured it out.

Lulav: Yeah. So it might just be that the writers are, like, being very clear about: sometimes the priests mess up!

Jaz: Right.

Lulav: And also sometimes rulers mess up. Neither of those classes of people are exempt.

Jaz: Yeah! And in fact they go into that later because priests aren't the same thing as a leader?

Lulav: Mm hmm.

Jaz: And so the next one, they are specific about "if it is a *chieftain*" — or, like, the leader of the people — (*Lulav chuckles*) even if the leader does it unwittingly; all of these things are sort of framed as if you did it accidentally which I wonder if that makes it easier to, like, have as part of the ritual? But anyway, so, (*Lulav chuckles*) if it is a chieftain who incurs guilt and then realizes it, or the people bring it to the leader's attention, or the sin of which he is guilty is made known, then there is an offering — not with the seven times shaking the blood, but still with blood.

Lulav: Okay.

Jaz: And then there's another case with the specific "if any person" — any individual regular person from among the population — "unwittingly does something they're not supposed to have done, or, something that they did becomes known, then there is an offering." Here is the sort of specifics of what you do if it's a sheep.

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: Yeah okay, but if one's means do not suffice for a sheep, then you bring two doves. And if one's means do not suffice for doves or pigeons, then you bring flour. That's what I was thinking of earlier.

Lulav: Yeah. So you're all the way, like halfway through chapter five, right?

Jaz: (overlapping) I skipped a little bit, yeah. There's a breakdown at the beginning of chapter five of what are some ways that an individual regular person could incur guilt.

Lulav: Yeah, so like, the four ways: two and three are touching unclean things,

Jaz: Mhm.

Lulav: So like the carcass of an unclean beast or when you touch human uncleanness, and then the fourth one is saying a rash oath for a bad *or* for a good purpose. Like, if you just say an oath and you realize that you shouldn't have done that. But the first one is, if you heard a public adjuration to testify and, though able to testify as one who has seen or learned of the matter, do not speak up, you are subject to punishment. So like, I want to talk of that specific description in two different paradigms.

29:17

Jaz: Okay.

Lulav: One is not participating in the justice of the community, but the other one is not snitching.

Jaz: Mmmm

Lulav: So what do you make of like why is not participating in justice / not snitching on the same level as touching poop or dead pigs?

Jaz: Oh I guess I was approaching it a little bit differently to try and see if there was a way that two and three could sort of make sense

Lulav: Okay

Jaz: And I feel like your question kind of frames it in a way of number one, you can see the reasoning for and number two and three are just kind of relatively pointless ones. So I would like to hear your thoughts about that one, because I didn't read it the same way

Lulav: I maen, two and three make sense to me cause like all of this is about when you unintentionally do something wrong

Jaz: mmm

Lulav: And you are making up for it by like cleansing yourself

Jaz: Mmm.

Lulav: And so it makes a lot of sense that if you accidentally touch something unclean, you make up for it by doing this procedure. It's just interesting to me that the touching of something unclean is the same category of uncleanliness as actually doing something wrong.

Jaz: Hmm

Lulav: slash something right, depending on what paradigm you're looking at it through (laughs)

Jaz: Sure. Well then I guess in that case I might think of as all of these seem to be somewhat communal processes

Lulav: okay.

Jaz: Or at least things that involve a community. You're offering it publicly, there are questions of maybe somebody brought it to the priests or leaders attention —

Lulav: mm

Jaz: You have the right to bring up — you know, if somebody else has done something wrong so that person goes through this process.

Lulav: It's something like, Shmuel stepped in the old sumphole and didn't make up for it and then the preiset goes and says Shmuel, you maybe gotta make your repentance. Is that it?

Jaz: Um, I was just going to say that when you have this thing at the beginning, about if you've heard of people in your community doing something bad, then you have to speak up about it.

Lulav: Hmm

Jaz: Or if you do something bad, then you have to make up for it, and both of them seem to be a variation on this theme of both personal responsibility and taking communal responsibility and then taking concrete action to fix either of those things.

Lulav: Yeah. It's just that the part that I'm struggling with is like, touching dirty things is on the same level as like, somebody had a sex crime done on them and you didn't speak up when they were looking for people to talk about what happened.

Jaz: Well, I think that you could — because the Torah is a living document, you could extrapolate even from that example you just gave. We actually have lots of examples in modern society where if people are touching something or someone that they shouldn't be, that's actually kind of a big deal.

Lulav: Okay.

Jaz: You know what I mean? If you don't think of it as like, just — like, okay, we've got a virus happening at the moment. If you knowingly are exposed to a virus and then you touch something and then people who are immunocompromised touch it, that's kind of a big deal! Don't do that! You know what I mean?

Lulav: Okay. Yeha, in the context of like, this person is going on to prepare food, like, Shumel stepped in the old sumphole and wiped it off with his hand and then made some matzah

Jaz: Yeah

Lulav: That's rough.

Jaz: Gross! Yeah.

Lulav: Cool. Thank you. Was there anything else that you wanted to talk about in this parsha?

Jaz: Yes, I was just going to say that they have this part, just here at the end also, that we didn't quite get to about if a person does something wrong and doesn't realize it at the time and then realizes it later, they do have to make up for it. They do have to bring these different offerings

L; yeah

Jaz: ANd they can be forgiven, but they do absolutely have to make up for it. And the same seems to be true for this other stuff here when they list ways that you can incur guilt, that there is this idea of — there are frameworks for you to make something right if you did it wrong.

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: We'll give you a very specific framework. You do have to do it. Like, you don't just get forgiveness without doing anything. It is your responsibility to make things right and if you see that somebody else is doing something wrong, it's also your responsibility to make things right as a member of that community.

Lulav: Yeah. Cool.

Jaz: And they give you a framework for how to do that. I like that.

Lulav: Yay.

Jaz: Do you have any additional thoughts about this parsha?

Lulav: Yeah. So there's a process for restitution, right, where you give back what was done wrong plus 20%. Is that a fair reading of the text?

Jaz: I think so.

Lulav: But also there's a sacrifice of a ram and the way that I interpret it, and this might be more the beginning of Tzav than the end of Vayikra, but I interpret it as you must make restitution to the people involved, but you also need to cleanse yourself of the wrongdoing, just like personally. SO the question that I have is what do you make of the concept of clearing wrongdoing through fairly expensive offerings to the priesthood?

Jaz: Well, obviously I don't in modern day want to advocate for the idea that you're giving offering to unrelated people for just ritual purposes, but I do think that there's a sort of nice balance there, of you definitely want to work on making restitution to the person that was harmed, but then, that's not the only thing you have to do. There's also stuff about making things right with the community and also about working on stuff separately and personally and this is something that resonates a lot with me personally as a framework, because in the past couple of years I've been thinking a lot about what to do about having done harm in the world.

Lulav: yeah.

Lulav: And that in some ways I wonder if this is comparable to like, if you hurt somebody, you want to do whatever you can to make it up to them, but also, maybe it's part of societal trend. Maybe that also means you have to give donations to like, other organizations that are working on that issue, that you contributed to, or maybe it also means you gotta go therapy and work some things out on your own, or — (Lulav chuckles) You know what I mean?

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: Like, maybe there's other steps in your process in addition to solving the specific issue.

Lulav: yeah, cool.

Jaz: Mm, what do you think?

L; Yeah. The reason that I brought this is, having been educated at multiple Lutheran schools, I take issue with the idea of indulgences. (laughs)

Jaz: Oh! Sure, okay. (laughs)

L; Which is kind of how I was interpreting that, the idea that you can cleanse yourself of the feeling of wrongdoing by offering to the temple.

Jaz: Yeah.

Lulav: But as I said, asking the question, and as you said following up, I love the idea of having to do additional work on yourself on top of making up for wrongdoing. That's great.

36:40

Lulav: So Jaz, welcome to Rating G-d's Writing, a segment that we don't forget about and then go back and record two weeks later.

Jaz: Nope, we've never done that.

Lulav: Nope, never. Certainly not right now. (Jaz chuckles) In which we rate the parsha on two different scales that we inflict upon each other.

Jaz: Great. Lulav, out of four different types of sin offerings, each with their own complicated rules, how many sin offerings would you rate this parsha?

Lulav: So is it which sin offering I'm giving, or how many of those four?

Jaz: How many of those four but if you would also like to tell us which kinds, I won't say no.

Lulav: Okay. So I am going to rate this... (laughs) it was a very interesting parsha, right.

Jaz: Sure.

L; Like, it's just talking about things that you offer for ritual purposes, but at the same time there was a lot to talk about. We recorded — we ARE recording this episode for so long. (Jaz chuckles) So I think I'm going to say it's the grain offering, the offering from the folk, and the offering from the herd.

Jaz: So three?

Lulav: yes. It wasn't something where I could really get down in there and do literary analysis of characters, just pull apart the narrative with my bare hands, and so I'm not including the bird offering. (laughs)

Jaz: You said the offering from the flock! Oh, not a bird flock.

Lulav: Yeah, like a goat? Goat? It's a goat flock, right?

Jaz: I — sure. Maybe?

Lulav: Sheep? What do we have? (both laughs) It's been so long since our people were shepherds.

Jaz: We're so bad at this.

Lulav: (laughs) Point is, yeah, three of four sin offerings.

Jaz: OKay. And no pulling apart pigeons with your bare hands. Great.

Lulav: So Jaz —

Jaz: Hit me.

Lulav: There is a specific sacrifice that you're supposed to do in thanks for receiving this parsha. What do you sacrifice at the temple in thanks for this parsha and are you sacrificing it because you don't want to eat and so G-d probably likes it, or are you sacrificing it to make the people giving the offering look good and it makes a bad smell?

Jaz: I — (laughs) I have a follow up question before I answer this scale.

Lulav: WHICH is, is it a personal project of yours to come up with ever more and more convoluted scales that can only loosely be called scale the further we get into this project?

Lulav: Yes. (Jaz laughs) One G-d, no masters!

Jaz: There we go. (both laugh) Okay, what am I offering in thanks for this parsha as a sacrifice...

Lulav: Mm hmm.

Jaz: And how do I feel about this parsha... well, I will offer — so, my favorite thing about this parsha that we explored and talked about was this idea of like, taking accountability for your actions and having to demonstrate that kind of accountability.

Lulav: Yeah

Jaz: And leaders having to do so, so they can be leaders. And I also found part of this thing really dull and frustrating, (Lulav laughs) so I'm sacrificing on the altar several really dense tomes of theory (Lulav laughs) and a couple law books.

Lulav: So book burning.

Jaz: No, uh —

Lulav: That seems out of character for you.

Jaz: Listen, you said sacrifice things you really like, and those are things I really like.

Lulav: Okay. (laughs)

Jaz: And I did it in honor of things I really liked and really cared about and really valued, and also these ones in particular are like, not the books that I'm there learning from about how to do good accountability work. They're like the mediocre ones that would be giving me bad advice.

Lulav: Okay. SO what you're saying is, you're willing to censor things that disagree with your viewpoints.

Jaz: Well, no, but —

Lulav: So much for the tolerant left.

Jaz: (laughs) I just don't fundamentally understand the idea of a sacrifice, is really what's happening here. (Lulav laughs) Like, I really believe in the idea of accountable practices and I really don't understand how burning something helps us get closer to it.

Lulav: Okay.

Jaz: anyway (laughs)

41:12

Lulav: Bless you. So yeah, let's move on to Continuity Corner. So, way back in the hale and hearty days of episode 19, Mishpatim, that was the one where we had Cassidy Mosity on, and my best friend was just listening to that episode. I want to be very clear that we're recording it when there are 20 episodes out? So they're a little behind, and it's okay to be a little behind. (Jaz laughs) You can in fact be my best friend and be a little behind on my podcast. So don't worry if you're not following exactly on the parsa cycle while listening to us. We love having you here at all.

Jaz: Yeah.

Lulav: Anyway, Theo says, "history is such an important jewish thing? listening to the episode with cassidy and considering how contemporary christians interpret these laws as set in stone (whether or not they observe them, and hence in christian atheism, something regressive & obsolete to be discarded)" and this paradigm is contrasted with "an aspect of a peoples' history that they remain in conversation with." Does that ring true to you Jaz? In terms of like, we think about laws as an aspect of our history that we remain in conversation with?

Jaz: Um, that seems very Reconstructionist to me. (Lulav chuckles) Which is to say, I love it —

Lulav: Like, that specific paradigm is Reconstructionist?

Jaz: Yeah.

Lulav: Can you talk a bit about other Jewish paradigms?

Jaz: Yeah, sure! So there has been the concept of halachah as law, right.

Lulav: Uh huh.

Jaz: And law as something you can you build on but not, um —

Lulav: Commute?

Jaz: Yeah. That, you know, one of the things about — okay, sometimes I'm talking with people about halachah and I'm like, you are asking you to do something that is more strict than what my grandparents did, and they were also Orthodox, (Lulav laughs) and you're also Orthodox, and the people say to me, "okay, but if your great-grandfather was alive today, he would be as strict as I am, not as strict as you are."

Lulav: Uh...

Jaz: And, honestly, they're probably right.

Lulav: Okay.

Jaz: There is a certain amount of halacha that builds fences around the Torah. That's the idea that you can definitely build on things, but not so much take things away.

Lulav: Yeah. SO I think that gets at like, a difference between the movement paradigms. It's not that any paradigm is more correct or more Jewish; these are all reactions of people over time to prior practices.

Jaz: mm.

Lulav: That's why I had that reaction when you said an ORthodox person might say that your great-grandfather would be practicing more like them than like you.

Jaz: mm hmm

Lulav: and that's not necessarily true because people in the past didn't have the exact conversations culturally as Jews that we do now.

Jaz: Mm.

Lulav: And so it might be possible — I don't know your great-grandfather — but it's possible either way, frankly.

Jaz: Yeah. And also, like, we know things about how different things are radical in their time and then become part of a semi-ossified way of thinking, right. Like, I come from a Hasidic family and now people think of Hasidic movements often as like, "these are the 'ultra-Orthodox' and they are the most strict" and whatever, and I understand sometimes where people get that from now, even if I don't always think it's that simple, but I also know that when it was created, it was this movement of incredible joy.

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: And of seeing that in daily life and seeing joyousness and holiness in every part of life and that was sort of radical at the time, so.

Lulav: Cool. You say you come from a Hasidic family.

Jaz: mm hmm.

Lulav: What does it mean to be Hasidim?

Jaz: That's such a big question.

Lulav: It really is.

Jaz: Okay, when I say I come from a Hasidic family, I mean that the Twerskys are a famous and known Hasidic line.

Lulav: Oh. Okay.

Jaz: That sometimes I go into spaces and I know that, oh, this is a space where I should introduce myself with my first and last name, (Lulav laughs) because I know if I do that, somebody will recognize it.

Lulav: Good.

Jaz: That I get a little bit more cred that way. And it's because when Hasidism was founded, my ancestors were among the first Hasids.

Lulav: Cool.

Jaz: And that Twerskys have been leaders of Hasidic dynasties — it's a big family. My current, my parents are not Hasid in their practice today though, and Hasidic communities today, they just have developed their own traditions and splits over time, and so different Hasidic communities may practice differently from each other, may have different notions and worldviews, they often have different leaders who might be particular to their specific group, and so they might vary from community to community.

Lulav: and the founding principle of Hasidism is you really dig deep on doing the commandments? Is that... like, take joy in that?

Jaz: Um. Yeah, there is a certain — again, I'm not a practicing Hasid. That seems like a thing that one could ask them.

Lulav: That's fair.

Jaz: But my understanding, yes, is that there is a certain amount of just relating to G-d and Judaism through text, which is more of what people were doing at the time, that this was more of a Judaism that could be of the people and through your own experiences and as you walk through the world you experience sort of the divine in the everyday.

Lulav: Yeah! Which really resonates with me.

Jaz: Good.

Lulav: So The latter half of Theo's comment was they had "been thinking also about how settler colonialism and so much of the US seeks to not just erase historical events but to

flatten & decontextualize history itself" and they end by saying "Americans' cultural memories are so short," which is definitely a thing that I've experienced. As I have previously stated, my experience in atheist movements was mostly trying to get people to be less New Atheist about things and despite that, I think — people would say that people have a variety of ways of interacting with the divine and that didn't make sense to me until I was on tumble and reading a bunch of Jewish posts and really getting into the extent to which it's about a culture and the arguing is the point

Jaz: mm

Lulav: Versus the very culturally Christian idea of there is one right thing and it's about belief. Like if you're arguing it's because somebody's wrong and also the beliefs themselves exist independently of anything you do about them, i guess. So you, Americans' cultural memories are short. I'm petering out.

Jaz: Yeah, yeah. It's good. And I appreciate Theo sending that in. And I appreciate your thoughts about how there's lots of different ways to relate to history and culture and I think that when you try to bridge all of those things, maybe you get things like what you were experiencing in those atheist spaces.

Lulav: (laughs) So, just to correctly attribute, Theo is @bizzardweird, which is spelled very strangely but they're cool.

Jaz: We'll drop it in the show notes.

Lulav: We'll drop it in the show notes. *(laughs)* Jaz, can you take us to the close?

Jaz: Sure can! Thanks 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, and concerns at kosherqueers@gmail.com, and please 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 my lovely co-host, Lulav Arnow.

Lulav: I ate the normal honey, but I deserve good honey.

Jaz: Aww.

Lulav: Our full transcripts, as with every episode, are done by DiCo and Jaz and definitely accessible through our episode descriptions on Buzzsprout!

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'm 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. Have a lovely queer Jewish day!

[Brivele outro music]

Jaz: This week's gender is: dangly rainbow costume clip on earrings.

Lulav: This week's pronouns are: alternating they/them and he/him.