

03 — Lech Lecha: Patriarchs and Matriarchs Behaving Badly

Content notes: a police siren can be heard from 21:44-21:55. This episode also contains references to slavery multiple times

Lulav: Jaz, has anything cool and Jewish happened to you recently?

Jaz: Well, so by the time this episode airs, we'll be long done with the high holidays and I'll be so relieved. It'll be great. *(Lulav laughs)* We're recording though, for our listener's context, in the weekend between Yom Kippur and Sukkot. There's that three day window — our holidays are so squished together —

Lulav: They are.

Jaz: And I work at a synagogue.

Lulav: Oh no.

Jaz: I'm like, a little bit, yeah. There was Yom Kippur and then National Mental Health Awareness Day and then National Coming Out Day, and it was just like, this is all a lot. This is all a lot! What are you up to?

Lulav: So, this isn't precisely Jewish, but it did involve at least two Jews and probably more than three opinions.

Jaz: Great.

Lulav: So today, my partner Tova slept over and they had to go to an art fair in the morning. And so, my morning was just spent getting them there, making the long journey and I had the ability to drive a car and they didn't, but they had need for driving a car.

Jaz: Mm-hmm.

Lulav: And so, we just came together. It was nice. We went to the University of Minnesota and all the doors to the building that they wanted were locked, so they were like, "hey, person idling in a car, do you have access to this building?" And he was like, "yeah sure." And so we called upon the kindness of strangers, and they helped and it was just overall, a really good day for being a Jew and working towards a good future of mutual assistance.

Jaz: That's so nice! I remembered. I actually do have a nice queer Jewish thing.

Lulav: *(laughs)* Okay, go ahead

Jaz: Which is that, okay, I went to a queer Jewish Shabbat dinner, invited by someone who I only know because we're both queer Jews in Brooklyn, and they were like, "come to my Shabbat dinner!" And I was like, "great." And I got there and I sort of vaguely recognized the

people across from me, and they were like, "are you Jaz?" And I was like, "yes? What is your name?" And they said, "we've met, we met at the Trans Jews are Here conference in" — uh, nope, "we met at the Trans Philly Wellness Conference." They are not trans, but they are very lovely queer rabbinical students and I got to hang out with them during the evening.

Lulav: Okay, so this wasn't the place where you also met Jayce, the leader of my queer Jewish organization?

Jaz: That one is the Trans Jews are Here convening.

Lulav: Okay.

Jaz: I just go to lots of things.

Lulav: Yeah! And meet people from all over the country who then see you again.

Jaz: Yeah.

Lulav: Or know people that you know.

Jaz: Yeah.

Lulav: That's great.

[Brivele opening credits music starts playing]

3:34

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 gonna talk about Lech Lecha.

Jaz: Every time I say that I'm talking about Lech Lecha, I get a flashback to like, NFTY in high school.

Lulav: Oh dear

Jaz: Or maybe camp, to that song that goes *(starts singing)* "Lech Lecha, to a place that I will show you. Lech Lecha, to a world you do not know." And I cannot sing, but Jewish summer camp really did its job because I have that very firmly stuck in my head and that is the beginning of this parsha but in song.

Lulav: Yeah. For this podcast, I'm the Christianity expert and you're the camp songs expert and honestly I think you got the much better deal on that one.

Jaz: Mm. *(both laugh)* For our listeners, in case they're like, "Jaz, what did you do?" I was at Jewish summer camp briefly, but also, the thing I said was NFTY, which is the acronym for the North American Federation of Temple Youth, which is the Reform youth group type of thing.

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: Yeah. Cool.

Lulav: I had a crush on a girl who in middle school did NFTY stuff.

Jaz: 'Kay. I definitely had crushes on people in NFTY also. Yeah. Okay, so I'm up to do the summary, and I'm a little intimidated. How much time do I have?

Lulav: Well, let's see here. I think this is a little more straightforward. There are fewer random stories than last time, so I'm going to give you thirty seconds.

5:19

Jaz: Oh no. Okay.

Lulav: Do you think you can do it?

Jaz: No, but let's give it a shot anyway! That's okay.

Lulav: Let me set this up. 0:0... 30. Okay, go!

Jaz: Uh, so, Abram and Sarah set out from the land that they're living in and go somewhere else to Israel, and then there's a famine and they go to Egypt and then Abram pretends that Sarai is his sister and she gets married to the Pharaoh and the Pharaoh's like, "why didn't you tell me that she was actually your wife?" And then gets mad at Abram and then they leave. And then they have lots of money and then they go back and then he splits the area with his nephew Lot and then *(alarm sound)* Yeah.

Lulav: Yeah, definitely should have given you more time on that. My bad.

Jaz: Like, I got halfway through! Yeah.

Lulav: Fair. Do you want to finish it up?

Jaz: Sure. Then there's a big fight with armies and then Abram goes to rescue Lot and wins a battle and then kings give him presents and stuff and Abram refuses them and then Abram has a kid with Hagar and then Sarai throws Hagar out of the house and then G-d promises them kids.

Lulav: Fair. *(Jaz laughs)* That is indeed what is promised, or seed, specifically, which is —

Jaz: Right? Sure.

Lulav: That's a way to refer to —

Jaz: Kids.

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: Yeah, I also, last time, did a lot of color commentary in my summary and I really tried to not do that for this one because I just didn't have enough time, but yeah, there's a lot going on.

Lulav: I think for future episodes we should set it to 45 seconds, at minimum.

Jaz: Yeah, okay. We'll try 45 seconds next time.

Lulav: Okay.

Jaz: Maybe at least until we get into things that are like, laws.

Lulav: Oh G-d. Yeah.

7:15

Jaz: Alright, so starting at the beginning, with the bit from my cute little song, (*Lulav laughs*) G-d tells them to leave the place where they are and go elsewhere. And Abram leaves with his family and all his stuff and his household and there's a little aside where it also notes that he brings his slaves. Which is a thing.

Lulav: Mm-hmm.

Jaz: And then they settle in Canaan, it says, and G-d says, "I am giving this land to you and your descendants" and Abram builds an altar. Do you have questions about this first bit?

Lulav: Not that first bit.

Jaz: 'Kay.

Lulav: I mean, we very much covered the existence of slavery in episode two.

Jaz: Yeah. But — sure. And then, after that, there is a famine and they leave the land that is given to them — even though there are already people there! Anyway. They leave that land and they go down to Egypt and Abram says to Sarai, "you're my wife, but since you're so beautiful, they might kill me so they can marry you, and I don't want them to kill me, so, will you pretend to be my sister?" And so that is what they do. Do you have questions about this bit?

Lulav: I do. Do we know why Egypt was the place to go during a famine in Canaan?

Jaz: I mean, I think we do a little bit, right? That it's because of the river. It's pretty close but it's not having a famine because the Nile has sustenance.

Lulav: That's like, hundreds of miles away though, right?

Jaz: Yeah? Yeah.

Lulav: Wild. Ancient travel is mystical and wonderful thing.

Jaz: Is that your question about this?

Lulav: So yeah, that was one half. And also, is this Abram and the army of relatives and bondsmen that we see later in the portion, or is it just Abram and Sarai or, what's your read on this?

Jaz: I don't think it's very clear, textually. But I think that everybody goes with them, because it talks about how they acquired all of this stuff, sheep and cattle and asses.

Lulav: Mm-hmm.

Jaz: Also more people! Also more slaves. *(sigh)* Okay, alright. Why?

Lulav: No, I'm just wondering because I don't have a sense of scale or what is provided for them in Egypt. I don't know. Yeah. It's fine.

Jaz: Okay.

Lulav: Yeah, I don't think it's a meaningful deep read that I was asking for. So, we can just move on.

Jaz: Okay. I do have questions about this first bit, just as a person, but not reading questions.

Lulav: *(chuckles)* I mean, yeah, talk about it.

Jaz: I just —

Lulav: Or do we have to get through Chapter 12 first?

Jaz: Yeah, why don't we get through some more of it and then we can discuss. Abram had said that Sarai was his sister and Pharaoh was like, "okay, well, if she's his sister and beautiful, I can marry her." And then G-d brings down plagues on them, struck Pharaoh and his household with severe afflictions and Pharaoh summons Abram and says, "why did you lie to me like this? Now we're suffering. And: leave, so that I won't be troubled anymore." And then they leave but they get to take all of their stuff with them.

Lulav: Yeah, which is wild. So, I have two questions on this bit here. The first one is, how do plagues on the house relate to, "oh, that's your wife, not your sister?" Like, what's the connection there?

Jaz: Is that, the normative thing, that you're like, "hmm, someone is sick in the house, all of us got sick suddenly. You know what must be the fault?"

Lulav: Bigamy! *(both laugh)* So my second question is from a genre that I am going to call "Drash-maker, drash-maker, drash me midrash."

Jaz: Great.

Lulav: How did Sarai feel about this whole Egypt thing? Because we're given a whole lot about how Abram feels about it, but nothing about her opinions or her actions in any of this.

Jaz: Right? And even, I said this thing about, he asked Sarai to do this, but it actually doesn't ever say she said yes.

Lulav: *(laugh)* G-d,

Jaz: Just that they did the thing. So... yeah. So there is this question of was she like, "this sounds like a great idea" or was she like, "my husband, darling, this is an extraordinarily bad idea," and he was just like, "well, we're doing it anyway."

Lulav: Yeah, so tell me your favorite story for that.

Jaz: I think that there are two versions of this that really appeal to me.

Lulav: Mm-hmm.

Jaz: And one of the is the version where she's like, "this is a bad idea," and he has them do it anyway, the one where she says, "it is not my fault and what if I just hid for a while instead of trying to concoct this ridiculous lie?" And then also, what does that mean in terms of practicality, right? It means on a day-to-day basis, we can't hold hands in public, cannot in any way behave like a married couple because then, that would be bad.

Lulav: Yeah

Jaz: And she has to watch her husband be committed enough to this scheme for it to last long enough for her to literally be taken away and married to somebody else. There is a whole wedding for her to go through and she has to watch her husband be so committed to this scheme that he's willing to go that far with the deception. And to me, I kind of want to give them the benefit of the doubt a little bit. Which is to say, they are climate refugees, kind of.

Lulav: Yeah. Right.

Jaz: They're fleeing a famine and they're like, well, these people in this new place are not going to be good to us and so we have to come up with these ridiculous deceptions so none of us die and hopefully nothing terrible happens to us. And so they come up with this pretty painful deception as a way of being like, "well, we need to eat and we need to not be killed and this is the least bad option," but also, coincidentally, the least bad option means that Sarai suffers.

Lulav: Right.

Jaz: And only Sarai suffers, pretty much.

Lulav: I really like this reading. The midrash that you just told. Because like, we're doing a queer podcast and it just feels like a gay couple that makes each other promises and then just has to go on living a straight life, like in *Brokeback Mountain*, which is a movie that I watched over a decade ago.

Jaz: I have never seen *Brokeback Mountain*.

Lulav: Wild. As I remember, it was a decent movie. I didn't think so at the time, but (*laughs*)

Jaz: Can you explain the connection, since I have never seen it?

Lulav: Yeah! So two cowboys are like, cowing boys up in the hills on Brokeback Mountain and they fall in love and then after that's over they don't get hired on again because the people who own the cattle or whatever it was are like, you were doing some homosexual stuff up there and then they both marry women (*Jaz makes a sad noise*) but are both still in love with each other (*Jaz makes another sad noise*) and it's a whole thing.

Jaz: Yeah. It's like we come up with convenient — not convenient, but we come up with lies to continue existing.

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: In the least bad situation possible. But also, in this version of it, it's the one where Abram actually gets off in a pretty good situation except that he doesn't have his wife, and Sarai doesn't have her husband *and* is stuck with someone else.

Lulav: Yeah. Oh also, for anyone who does want to watch Brokeback Mountain and hasn't, there is at the end, major character death in a very graphic manner.

Jaz: Oh

Lulav: Hate-crime-wise. So that's great. (*Snaps*)

14:56

Jaz: So then they go back and it says they go into the Negev and Abram has lots of money now and there is a fight between their servants, basically, between, it says, "Abram's cow-herders and his nephews cow-herders," between him and Lot. Abram says, "but we shouldn't be fighting; we're family. Let's go settle in slightly different areas so that we won't be fighting," and then Lot chooses a different area in Jordan and goes and lives there. It's real weird to hear it being with real places. And they separate for a while and Lot goes into Sodom. This is our first mention of the city of Sodom. Do you have anything to say about 13, where they split stuff with Lot, or not really?

Lulav: I just wanted to point out, like dang, they probably have a lot of livestock if they're splitting up and having to go to completely different places. Do you have a different read on

that?

Jaz: I don't really, except that there is this note about like, the land could not support them both and I'm noting that they just were like, we can go anywhere and that's wild. (Lulav laughs) Understanding that they came in with a lot of money and there were already people living there. It's like a biblical colonization.

Lulav: Yeesh.

Jaz: And the other bit in 13, I guess, is that it's kind of sweet that Abram is like, I just don't want us to fight. Family shouldn't fight, and so the solution therefore, is families also don't need to see each other all that often.

Lulav: (*laughs*) fair. Fourteen! Fourteen! Fourteen! Gimme that military history. (*laughs*)

Jaz: (*laughs*) Yeah. Fourteen is just like, lots of people fight each other. (*Lulav laughs*) That's the whole thing.

Lulav: Yup.

Jaz: And i don't really know why

Lulav: Yup.

Jaz: But one of the people whose fighting is head of where Lot is living so Abram goes to rescue him and gets a military victory.

Lulav: And he just rolls up with like 318 dudes.

Jaz: Yeah. Yeah! Where did he get them from?

Lulav: Well, it says that they're born in his house and trained men, so my guess is that —

Jaz: Are these also enslaved people? (*sigh*)

Lulav: Like, slavery worked differently back then. Like, it wasn't chattel slavery, where you own a person and all of their descendants forever.

Jaz: Well, we do —

Lulav: I think it was more feudal in nature.

Jaz: — right after this, have a note that they refer to someone as a slave and also Abram's heir before he has any kids, so —

Lulav: Yeah, right.

Jaz: I think that you are right that this is not exactly the same as chattel slavery, but I don't know enough of the historical context to know what it is most appropriate to compare it to. And it does still sound like they're still expected to do whatever he says, so — yeah.

Lulav: My guess is that people become slaves because they don't have resources and there are people already established in the area as shepherds and stuff and so they serve those people and become part of their house.

Jaz: That we're talking sort of closer to indentured servitude type of deal.

Lulav: Right. Is my understanding. Which is mostly pulled out of nowhere, but *(laughs)*

Jaz: Okay. Maybe we can research it for next time.

Lulav: Yeah, that's a great idea, I'll add that to the document.

Jaz: Great, thank you. Cuz it is real uncomfortable to be like, of right, the Bible just has lots of casual slavery.

Lulav: Yup!

Jaz: So Abram gets this military victory, and the king of Sodom offers him a lot of treasure, basically, as a thank you gift and Abram won't take any of it. And it's not totally clear to me why, but he doesn't take any of it because of G-d.

Lulav: Yeah, so that's my question here. First off, did G-d mention anything about Sodom previously and how Abram had to be a self-made man?

Jaz: I don't think so! Right?

Lulav: So is it just the way that he asked? Melchizedek brought out bread and wine and was like, "hey, you're cool," and Abram just gave him stuff and then the king of Sodom was like, "hey, give me all those cool fighting dudes that you brought with you. You can keep your presents," and he was just like, "nah dude! I'm not giving you anything?" Is that it?

Jaz: I don't know. I think that maybe, there is this impression that they do refer to Sodom already earlier in here as wicked or sinners and maybe there's this idea of these people are bad and I don't want for the sake of my reputation or whatever, to say they helped me, because it's phrased as, "I would take nothing of yours, not even a thread or a sandal-strap — you shall not say, 'I enriched Abram.'" So there is sort of this implication that it has to do with, I won't take anything of yours because I don't like you.

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: Which is a line to draw, I guess.

Lulav: Yeah, especially when you're filthy stinkin' rich

Jaz: Yeah. Although it is kind of interesting in the, "could that be an applicable model" type of way. If you were a nonprofit, do you take money from anybody? That kind of question.

Lulav: No, I was definitely thinking that too, thanks for bringing that up.

Jaz: What do you think?

Lulav: I think that pride isn't terribly good but drawing lines and being like, "no, I'm not going to leave my indentured servants with you, they're cool, they're my bros," *(laughs)* that's a fine line to draw imo.

Jaz: Okay. *(laughs)*

Lulav: I'm trying to think of the nonprofit parallel here *(laughs)* but that's going to take too long to puzzle out.

Jaz: Okay.

Lulav: Fifteen! Fifteen! Fifteen!

Jaz: Right, okay. And then, G-d comes and says, "I'll reward you!" And Abram's like, "what can you possibly give me?" Which is a very fun thing to say to G-d. What can you possibly give me when I'm going to die childless and the heir to my household is this person who is one of his indentured servants, I guess? And then G-d promises him a kid and that he'll have as many kids as the stars *(page turning)* and then Abram sacrifices and then G-d talks about the future of his kids and makes a covenant, a deal with him, and talks more about how many there will be, and then *(sigh)*, yes, that's the end of fifteen. Do you have anything more in 15, or can I continue this story in 16?

Lulav: I just want to point out with making the covenant that he cuts the sacrifices, and this'll come up later!

21:44

(siren can be heard in the background)

Jaz: Okay! Alright. Did you have a question about that, or you're just like, oh, foreshadowing.

Lulav: It's foreshadowing from some of the stuff that I learned in freshman year humanities.

Jaz: Okay. Okay, and then after they have this exchange, Sarai and Abram decide that Abram should have a kid with Hagar and Hagar is referred to as an Egyptian slave, so.

Lulav: Mm-hmm.

Jaz: And specifically as not Abram's, but Sarai's slave, that she's giving this almost as a gift and then Hagar becomes pregnant and has a kid and Sarai is really unhappy about it because she think Hagar is looking down on her now and she's like, that doesn't seem right to me. And then

—

Lulav: How does your copy translate that? The looking down on her?

Jaz: "Her mistress became for her an object of scorn."

Lulav: Okay. So the NRSV translates it as "Looked with contempt" but also has a footnote that says that the Hebrew verb used here basically means to treat lightly, which implies that Hagar didn't look up to her mistress the way she once did. Which of those do you prefer?

Jaz: I — that's fascinating. It seems appropriate that she wouldn't look up to her, so that seems fine to me. And object of scorn is kind of an interesting one. Sarai, I think, is supposed to be more acceptable, you know, in that nobody likes being an object of scorn, even though the power dynamics are still so drastically off there —

Lulav: Boy howdy, they are!

Jaz: — that it doesn't, I think, succeed in making her look more justifiable, but certainly not looking up to someone is different than looking at someone scornfully, so.

Lulav: Mm-hmm. I mean, I just, what did Sarai expect going into this arrangement?

Jaz: Yeah.

Lulav: You have to talk about managing your expectations in any polyamorous arrangement, especially so that you don't end up evicting the one partner who doesn't have an income.

Jaz: Yeah!

Lulav: And then they're couch-surfing for like five months. Can you tell I have friends in Seattle?

Jaz: *(laughs)* Yeahhh.

Lulav: You were going to say?

Jaz: It is very much the, like, "we were going up our relationship. Oh no, we opened up our relationship!"

Lulav: *(laughing)* No one could have seen this coming!

Jaz: And now, also, I have hurt completely innocent people. You know what I mean? It's not like she's then mad at her husband. She's mad at a child and her husband's partner, who also, unclear whether Hagar is down to be Abram's partner.

Lulav: Mm-hmm. Boy, howdy. This is a whole thing.

Jaz: Yeah.

Lulav: Want to finish out the chapter?

Jaz: Yeah. Hagar tries to run away and an angel comes and tells her to go back and say that her son Ishmael will also be head of a great nation but also that he'll be wild and will be in permanent opposition to all his kin.

Lulav: He shall be a wild ass of a man with his hand against everyone."

Jaz: Uh huh

Lulav: "and everyone's hand against him."

Jaz: Yeah. Anyway, but so then she goes back and that lasts for like a minute and then — oh no, maybe that is all that happens in this chapter.

Lulav: Yep.

Jaz: Okay.

Lulav: Okay, why is your son's going to be a real heck-raiser part of an appealing covenantal pitch. I don't get that.

Jaz: Uh huh

Lulav: Like, the whole thing where Hashem repeats the "your descendants shall number the stars" sort of thing, that's fine! That's appealing, maybe. But, "your son's going to be combative?" What?

Jaz: Mm. Although Abram did just win a big military victory, so maybe that's a thing?

Lulav: Oh. Yeah, okay.

Jaz: But against all his kin is like, maybe intentionally a bad thing.

Lulav: Right.

Jaz: Real uncomfortable, also, with the background of that one being, and then Ishmael is Muslim?

Lulav: Yeah. Ishmael is considered a patriarch for Muslims.

Jaz: Right. The last of this chapter is that G-d changes their names to Abraham and Sarah and promises Sarah a child born from her body and then Abraham circumcises everybody.

Lulav: Okay, finally we can say their names without pausing first to be like, oh right, this is the short one.

Jaz: *(laughs)* Right.

Lulav: Oh, this is the one with the "i" at the end.

Jaz: Yeah. Yeah. Small side note, but if they change their names and they have new names now, aren't you supposed to use the names that they have now, retroactively, because that's the polite thing to do? You're not supposed to use people's old names, even to refer to their old selves. I just have too strong of trans etiquette, I can't do it. *(laughs)*

Lulav: The AP standards definitely say, call them by their real names, but I think there's a certain paradigm wherein you change your name and the name that you had before still describes who you were before and the name that you have now describes who you are now. And so, when you or other people are telling stories about the old you, it is correct to say Sarai and going forward, you are Sarah. Does that make sense?

Jaz: I guess? I mean, if you're talking literary criticism, books always happen in present tense, right?

Lulav: Right.

Jaz: So you're like, when this is happening, when she's Sarai, and then when she's Sarah, and both of those are present tense, because they're both always in present tense?

Lulav: And I think that if it were a closer analogue to transness, then I wouldn't have much more problems with this. It just seems like the way that I conceive of Jewish names specifically and the nature of, "you have this name because it describes who you are," rather than "you have this name because it's something that you like being called."

Jaz: But some of our names describe who we are.

Lulav: Right.

Jaz: Your name describes who you are. That's why you have it, right?

Lulav: Also, there is a non-zero percentage of trans people who are like, yeah, talk about me as my deadname in the past.

Jaz: That's true.

Lulav: Side note: to anyone who isn't trans listening to this, do not ever do that to somebody unless they explicitly tell you.

Jaz: Yeah. Right. That's more of what I — yes, there is a non-zero number of people, but that is a pretty minority opinion.

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: Yeah.

Lulav: Always call people by their current name.

Jaz: Yeah. So it is weird to be like, and then person by a different name, who we will in the future call a different name — you know, so. But.

Lulav: Yeah. Names are wild.

Jaz: Names are great.

Lulav: Circumcision! Circumcision!

Jaz: Did you have a question about circumcision?

Lulav: No, I just want you to talk through that. Did you already summarize that?

Jaz: I just said, "and then Abraham circumcises everybody."

Lulav: Oh. I totally missed that. Because it's like half of a chapter.

Jaz: It's like — yeah. Abraham gets very specific directions for who and how and when and all of those sorts of things.

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: *(page turning)* And then circumcises a lot of people.

Lulav: Okay. So the thing that I have to say here is like, this is the sign of a covenant, and whereas with most covenants, you'd be like, "okay, I'm going to give you some cattle and you're going to give me a place to live and some spouses for my children, let's sacrifice a cow over this," in this case, instead of taking something else as a sacrifice, cutting the covenant with something else, they cut the covenant with their own flesh.

Jaz: Mm.

Lulav: And it's something that's not terribly useful.

Jaz: True.

Lulav: But is also very obvious in certain contexts. And we see this a lot with Jews where it's like, you give yourself signs of your covenant with G-d even though that might not be popular.

Jaz: Mm.

Lulav: Like you mark your door-frame with a call to listen.

Jaz: Sure, yeah.

Lulav: And in this case, it's, you circumcise your penis.

Jaz: Sure. And that is the thing that's been on my radar — not circumcision, but public markers of Jewishness, because in the last year I've started wearing a kippah full time.

Lulav: Nice.

Jaz: And people react to me differently.

Lulav: *(laughs)* They sure do.

Jaz: And strangers on the street react to me differently, and that's weird. And that's also part of why I wear it, but yeah, it is an interesting thing to think about, especially since so much of other Jewish stuff is like, make no changes to your body whatsoever.

30:57

Lulav: Yeah, so that's the chapter, right?

Jaz: Yeah, do you have any particular thoughts that you had on the chapter? Or like overarching things where you were like, what are things that we should talk about about this one?

Lulav: No, I asked you all of the stuff in situ. Did you have an overarching thing that you wanted to talk about?

Jaz: Well, so we didn't have listener questions for this one, so I went and looked something else up.

Lulav: Mm-hmm.

Jaz: Rabbi Ruti Regan was tweeting on Twitter about how Lech Lecha was the parsha when the 2016 election happened, so I went and looked up what were the discussion questions that people were talking about online for Lech Lecha in 2016.

Lulav: Nice.

Jaz: For the weekly parsha chat that happens on Twitter, to be like, what were we talking about then? And it opens with this one that says, "G-d said go forth from your native land and from your father's house to the land that I will show you," and the follow up question was like, "after the other night, a lot of Americans have been talking about leaving. What do you think about that?"

Lulav: Yeah. Like, famine upon the land and stuff.

Jaz: Yeah.

Lulav: I guess? Is that the analogy there? You know, there's a famine upon the land so you go to Egypt? Is that the analogue? Or...?

Jaz: No, because at the beginning, there isn't a famine. It's just Abraham and Sarah are going to go settle in Canaan. They're not driven there by circumstances; they're just driven there by G-d. It is almost more of a destiny type of framework.

Lulav: Yeah. Which speaking of things that Christians interpreted in a wonderful way, that has had great implications for history.

Jaz: Right. Manifest Destiny was a big ole racist mess. Yeah.

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: But it is interesting to think that G-d's commandment sometimes is, "leave home." The reason I did want to bring it up is there's this idea that they say specifically, leave home and leave your father's home and then the other things that happen with family in this one is Abraham goes to save Lot, but first he says to Lot, "why don't you move further away so we don't fight?" and then there's this thing with Abraham and Sarah where they're like, "what kind of family should we be to the outside world?" and so there's a little bit this question of how close should we be to family and when should we leave them?

Lulav: Yeah. I feel a lot of solidarity with partisaners, fighting for the place where you live and the people that you love and only getting out if you really need to and there's nothing left for you. So I'm of the opinion that I'd rather die on a barricade than be driven out and groped at the airport on the way out or something.

Jaz: Oof.

Lulav: Side note: Totally did not think in 216 that I was going to live this long (*laughs*) so like, shehecheyanu, I guess!

Jaz: Yeah, we made it here! It is an interesting thing because I don't have that framework as much. Maybe because I moved around when I was younger, because I sort of feel like, you know, bring your family; we can live anywhere. The important thing is we're all alive, bring your people and if your people aren't working for you, make your family out of the people who are working for you, who will be bound together by love and commitment and whatever, and then you can do that anywhere. The less important part is the physical place and the more important part is that you have your people.

Lulav: I think for me it's like, if someone really important to me asked to go and for me to go with them, then I might consider that. It's like, the concept of not that you would die for someone, but that you would live for them.

Jaz: Mm. Yeah. That's almost more of the thing that Abraham and Sarai do here.

Lulav: Yeah, right?

Jaz: They're like, well, we had a home here, but I guess we'll go to Egypt and figure out what to do.

Lulav: Right. And do very very hard things on the way.

Jaz: Yeah. Really hard. I think it's time for Rating G-d's Writing

Lulav: Yes. Rating G-d's Writing is a segment where we rate G-d's writing. The parsha: we rate it! On different scales. *(laughs)* Jaz, is it me or you going first?

Jaz: *(laughs)* I'll go first. Out of descendants who number the stars, how many stars would you give this parsha?

Lulav: *(laughing)* What? Okay! Yeah, this is the first one that hasn't been a fractional scale, okay. I love this.

Jaz: Yeah. Yeah.

Lulav: I would give this parsha — there's so much here. I'm going to give it 12,000 stars on a cloudy day or about 25 million on a very clear day.

Jaz: Okay. What do those distinctions mean?

Lulav: It's good.

Jaz: Okay.

Lulav: I don't know. You're the one who gave me an open-ended scale.

Jaz: Yeah, I just thought you'd explain it

Lulav: Just on a cloudy day you can't see a lot of the less bright or smaller stars.

Jaz: Mm-hmm.

Lulav: Yeah, so that's the difference there. Is it's either 12,000 or 25 million.

Jaz: Alright, depending on how you're feeling about the parsha on any given day.

Lulav: *(laughs)* I guess. So Jaz, how many strapping young lads born in your house, out of 318 of them, would you rate this parsha?

Jaz: *(laughs)* I had really really mixed feelings about this parsha.

Lulav: Yup.

Jaz: What with the lots of slavery and lots of colonialism happening and also really unclear stuff with Hagar and also the stuff in Egypt with Sarai, I felt really complicated about this one. I think there's lots of room to have interesting interpretations, but also, *(groan)* it leaves me feeling a little icky, so, yeah. What was it, 318?

Lulav: Mm-hmm. Strapping lads born in your house.

Jaz: *(laughs)* Uh huh. Yeah. Sure. I'd give it maybe like a 200.

Lulav: Okay! That's higher than I honestly expected, given the moral ambiguity of this chapter. Cool. Is it the outro part? What do we do next?

Jaz: No, no, no! We had a thing we said we'd come back to. We have a new segment of our just, quick things we said we'd come back to.

Lulav: Oh right! Let's see here. Things we said we'd come back to. Back in episode 1, we had the Reform translation: "'Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and tame it. Hold sway over the fish of the sea and the birds of the sky and over every animal that creeps on the earth.'" What's the biblical Hebrew word there? And what do we think the best translation would be?

Jaz: Right. So we were curious about the word "subdue" because the Reform translation uses the word "tame" and NRSV and Chabad use "subdue." And so I found the Hebrew word.

Lulav: Is this "vekibeshah?"

Jaz: It's "vekhibesheh" I think? Or "vekhibeshu."

Lulav: I think that's pronounced "ah," right? That vowel marking on the... whatever the "h" letter is?

Jaz: Ah. Vekhiveshuah. Yeah. I think that's right. Anyway, I found the root of it. It's less important exactly how it's pronounced

Lulav: True.

Jaz: But the root of it is kaf, bet, shin, and it's very firmly not "tame." It's very firmly more "subdue"

Lulav: Oof.

Jaz: Or even "bring into bondage or slavery." It's very much like, you own the earth and are it's master and you're dominating it.

Lulav: Friggin' yikes!

Jaz: Yeah.

Lulav: Is that where kibosh comes?

Jaz: I have no idea, but that would make total sense to me.

Lulav: Cuz I think that's Yiddish, right?

Jaz: Maybe? They also note that if you have a noun that shares this root, of kaf bet shin, that noun is probably like, "footstool." Like, you are literally standing on it.

Lulav: *(laughing)* Yikes!

Jaz: Yeah.

Lulav: All the animals are your footstool!

Jaz: It's super intense.

Lulav: So that's a thing we feel bad about in retrospect. *(laughs)*

Jaz: It is a thing we feel bad about, in retrospect. Or at least, complicated about in retrospect. Yeah. Okay, that's our update. I will hopefully have more things where we will come back to them and we will remember that we said we'd come back to them. That will happen here, at the end.

Lulav: Can you take us to the close?

Jaz: Yeah! 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. Our artwork is by the talented Lior Gross. Our music is courtesy of the fabulous band Brivele, whose work you can find on Bandcamp. Our sound production is done by my lovely co-host, Lulav Arnow.

Lulav: *(creepy laugh)*

Jaz: *(laughs)* 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."

Jaz: Have a lovely queer Jewish day!

[Brivele outro music]

Jaz: This week's gender is: a poster full of stickers.

Lulav: This week's pronouns are: zie/zer.