

**Lulav:** Welcome to Dairy Coughs, the segment where I complain about made-up illnesses with real symptoms. Ahem. And Jaz denies my lived experience.

**Jaz:** Dairy coughs are not a thing!

**Lulav:** They totally are. Theo agrees with me.

**Jaz:** So, Lulav, aside from making up things and having a vivid imagination, what's something cool and queer and Jewish you did this week?

**Lulav:** I ate tzatziki, which is not cool and queer or Jewish, but... Dairy coughs are very real. Anyway. Following your prompt. I took you to meet one of my friends from college, while she was working at her bookstore.

**Jaz:** Yeah.

**Lulav:** We've mentioned Em on the podcast before, because she had some really fun information about London Jewry, and it was cool because: love a bookstore, and Em is unbelievably cool. It was queer in that everybody conversing was gay, and also, I got to talk with Em about how she and her wife just bought a house; and it was Jewish because we're all at different stages of coming into our Jewishness.

**Jaz:** Mmm. And we talked about that a little bit.

**Lulav:** Yeah. I'm really excited to be in the same religious community as Em. Pretty rad.

**Jaz:** Yeah.

**Lulav:** And we bought *Catfishing on CatNet*, which is a really quick read of a near-future thriller by local Minnesota author, Naomi Kritzer, and also *Piranesi* by Susanna Clarke, who astute readers may remember from—

**Jaz:** *Jonathan Strange and Mr Norrell*?

**Lulav:** Yes! That one. A book which extremely informed my lore-based understandings of fair folk.

**Jaz:** That's great. I never read *Jonathan Strange and Mr Norrell*, but I definitely knew other people that did, and have definitely heard things about it for years.

**Lulav:** Yeah. I did, I think, bounce off of it the first time I tried to read it, but then I was dating an English major who really liked it, and I read it and actually liked it that time.

**Jaz:** My understanding is that it is quite long—

**Lulav:** Mm-hmm.

**Jaz:** —and not as regularly found in your local library as one might hope for.

**Lulav:** Oh, really? That's wild.

**Jaz:** Which is to say, I think it was not in my local library either of the two times that I went to go get it out, and then have not tried in any of the places I've lived since.

**Lulav:** That's very fair. Oh, I also played a TTRPG based on *Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norrell*, when I was, again, in college. I'm looking forward to *Piranesi*. It is, unfortunately, not as easy a thing to pick up as a YA thriller about AI.

**Jaz:** Yeah. But *Catfishing on CatNet* was really fun. Not particularly Jewish, but definitely queer.

**Lulav:** Yeah, that's fair. Wait. Were there any Jewish things? I'm trying to remember.

**Jaz:** Not that I remember.

**Lulav:** Rachel's Jewish, right?

**Jaz:** Iunno. Her name is just Rachel.

**Lulav:** *(laughs)* Fair.

**Jaz:** Easy mistake to make.

**Lulav:** Uh-huh. Anyway. What's something cool and queer or Jewish that's happened in your life recently?

**Jaz:** Well, you mentioned that we visited your friend, Em, in person, which we did, but we're not in-person right at this moment, and so, yesterday night, right before I fell asleep, we did some gay math. *(Lulav laughs)* Which is to say, we figured out how much time, since we've known each other — roughly orders-of-magnitude-wise — we've spent, like, on the phone, or on calls, doing things like recording podcasts, or just hanging out with each other, or like,

having official structure for date nights, versus how much time we had spent together, like, in person, in meatspace—

**Lulav:** Mm-hmm.

**Jaz:** —because I was very convinced that we had spent substantially more time together digitally and was trying to figure out, like, roughly, how much time we would have to spend together in person to, like, break even?

**Lulav:** Mm-hmm.

**Jaz:** So that I was like, that way, I will know when that is coming up, and we can mark that in some way, and that'll be cute. It turned out I was just completely wrong (*Lulav laughs*) and time and math are weird that way—

**Lulav:** Uh-huh.

**Jaz:** —and spending time together in person just happens so much faster.

**Lulav:** Yeah.

**Jaz:** Like, digital interactions can spread five hours over, like, five days, but five hours in person is still just one day.

**Lulav:** Uh-huh. Barely one day, when we are staying over at each other's places.

**Jaz:** Right. Anyway, which is to say, we've definitely spent more time together in-person than digitally, which was wild for me.

**Lulav:** And even when you don't count time that both of us are asleep, or you shave off time for bathroom, still, like, couple hundred more hours.

**Jaz:** Yeah. Yeah. It was a wild realization for me about how time works, which you'd think I would know. Also, it was, like, pretty basic math, like, a child could have done it, but it was still very surprising to me.

**Lulav:** Mm-hmm. This math was done, by the way, coming off of me adding up all of the purchases across five different people, and a month and a half, and figuring out who needed to pay who. So—

**Jaz:** Okay, that was unrelated math.

**Lulav:** It was totally unrelated math, but I think I mentioned math and you were like, "How's about some of this math?" And by the time we finished that conversation, I was so mentally burned out. From doing basic arithmetic and, like, arguing about definitions that didn't actually matter to either of us, but we're Jews?

**Jaz:** And then we both fell immediately to sleep.

**Lulav:** Oh, good. I'm glad.

**Jaz:** So, on the note of gay reading and gay math, of which we could clearly write whole new curricula, (*Lulav laughs*) can we move into gay Jewish studies, and talk about the parsha?

**Lulav:** (*southern accent*) Oh, I reckon we sure can.

(*Brivele intro*)

**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 we're here to joke about Judaism, and talk Tanakh together. Today, our chevruta is learning the haftarah of Eikev, which is Yeshiyahu 49:14 - 51:3. Once more, we are in the Consolations, and once more, we are reading from the book of Isaiah.

**Jaz:** We sure are.

**Lulav:** Jaz, can you remind me a little bit about parashat Eikev, because I did not look at it before this episode, and so I hope I will be pleasantly surprised by what you have to share.

**Jaz:** Hmm. Well, I can definitely share stuff from Eikev, and I actually do think there are connections—

**Lulav:** Mm!

**Jaz:** —between the parsha and the haftarah, which I wasn't expecting for our Consolation, but I don't know if you'll be pleasantly surprised.

**Lulav:** Mmm. Okay. How many seconds would you like to summarize Eikev?

**Jaz:** I'm gonna be ambitious and say that I can do it in one minute.

**Lulav:** Ooooh! 3, 2, 1, go.

**Jaz:** If you do everything you're supposed to, you will be so blessed, will grow, thrive, have children and no infertility and won't get sick, but your enemies will. Mercilessly! Now, you can't expect to defeat and conquer them all at once, because then you'd have a power vacuum and animals to contend with, but they will all slowly die to get out of your way. This is a good thing! Also, burn other people's gods, and don't bring them into your homes. Remember, you were tested in the desert and it was rough, but your feet never hurt, and that was because of G-d. Anyway, you're going to have a good land with good things, which you don't really deserve, and you should never pretend you actually earned them. Other people are maybe worse as long as you behave, but that's not quite the same thing as being actually good. Also, remember that it's me, Moses, speaking, and I remember you measly people building an idol and how I smashed the two tablets and prayed for you for weeks so you wouldn't be destroyed, and then made more tablets, and you were still fraidy-cats. And now you've gotta be just as good as possible to honor the miracle that got you here and the wonders that you'll have in the future that are definitely coming, pinky-swear. And repeat this all the times and all the places to all the Jewish people.

**Lulav:** Great. That was extraordinarily evocative of which parsha this was.

**Jaz:** Right?

**Lulav:** I had horrid flashbacks.

**Jaz:** Uh-huh.

**Lulav:** Yeah, so what connections are you seeing here?

**Jaz:** So, the main ones I'm seeing is that it's about how you're not actually good, but you might get good things, and you might get second chances, and other people are maybe worse and will end up kind of subservient to you—

**Lulav:** Mmm.

**Jaz:** —and God'll take care of you, but also, you got to remember, it's not 'cuz you deserve it. (*Lulav laughs*) 'Cuz you're not great. You got real work to do on yourself.

**Lulav:** Yeah. Wow. No, that's really fair. I think this haftarah definitely focuses more on, like, the good things that will come to Am Yisrael than the inadequacies that are focused on in the parsha, right?

**Jaz:** I guess so, but I don't think that significantly; like, I do think both elements are still there, of punishment for other people and good things for you, and it's not that you're so great...

**Lulav:** Mm-hmm.

**Jaz:** But we can try and see those different elements as we go through it, I think.

**Lulav:** Yeah. The title that we decided on for episode 42 was "The Opposite of Iniquity," because we were talking about how not doing bad things isn't the same as doing good things.

**Jaz:** Mm-hmm.

**Lulav:** Which is definitely a theme that you picked up on in your short summary. That was great. So yeah, that's a thing that we should consider as we're reading through the text of Yeshiyahu 49-51.

**Jaz:** Yeah.

**Lulav:** Because we're in the Consolations, instead of context — because, again, it's Yeshiyahu, for like, the 20th time —

**Jaz:** Are you gonna give us a Consolation?

**Lulav:** Yes. I didn't bring a specific piece of poetry—

**Jaz:** Mmm.

**Lulav:** —but I did bring the podcast *otipêyimisiw-iskwêwak kihci-kîsikohk*, also known as *Métis in Space*, (*increasingly quiet, like echoes*) Space, Space, Space, (*Jaz laughs*) which is a podcast in which two Métis women drink socially and then watch really racist movies and critique them. And like, you might say, "Lulav, that just sounds kind of bad, but by cool people." And I would say, "Yes, you're right." The thing that is thoroughly enjoyable and that gives me hope for a future is a) these are two people who are active in creating a modern extension of the culture that they come from—

**Jaz:** Mmm.

**Lulav:** —that is, like, joyous, in the same way that you and I try to do, but it's like a culture that I am totally unfamiliar with. I don't live in Canada; I have no First Nations connections; I did not know anything about Cree before this podcast...and it's great. Just, like, seeing

people be themselves and living their lives — and interestingly, this is a podcast that has existed for like, the better part of a decade—

**Jaz:** Yeah.

**Lulav:** —and they haven't released that many episodes, which is a thing that I admire: the ability to be like, "Okay, we're not going to take this one week at a time, we're just going to get episodes out according to the schedule that we decided upon and like, what works with our lives," and that is beautiful. So yeah, they've been doing this for seven years, and have...uh, I can't count. But it is, like, less audio than we as a podcast have put out—

**Jaz:** Whoaaa.

**Lulav:** —and it's so precious. Yeah.

**Jaz:** Well, that means you could marathon their whole backlog, it sounds like.

**Lulav:** You definitely could. I've been listening to some of their episodes that I had previously downloaded, and...yeah. It just made me really happy, because there's a lot of indigenous futurisms there.

**Jaz:** Nice.

**Lulav:** Like, in addition to kvetching about sci-fi movies that are really racist about natives, they have this, like, totally inscrutable-to-me fiction about--they're getting transmissions from, like, three centuries in the future when First Nations people in what is today Canada made a space program and are living amongst the stars and having a great time with it. And one of their daughters has this kind of absurdist bit, in which she is maybe a reincarnation of Samuel Champlain, but also an alien, and they use that to, like, talk about colonial mentalities and alternative life-affirming stuff, and it's great. *(laughs)*

**Jaz:** That's great.

**Lulav:** Yeah. So, I have really enjoyed *otipêyimisiw-iskwêwak kihci-kîsikohk*, and I hope that if you have sometimes watched sci-fi and been like, "I love this, but also, it's pretty racist," it's a great podcast to listen to for exercising those muscles and not having to rewatch those things. *(laughs)*

**Jaz:** Beautiful.

**Lulav:** Yeah. So the hosts are Molly Swain and Chelsea Vowel, and they're really cool. They're both Métis. Is there anything else— they're both on Twitter.

**Jaz:** Okay, we'll link to *Métis in Space*, and both of their social media accounts.

**Lulav:** Yeah. Have you listened to any of *Métis in Space*?

**Jaz:** I have not. Many people have spoken warmly of it, but since I don't really watch sci-fi movies... (*Lulav laughs*) I have felt like—

**Lulav:** Fair.

**Jaz:** —it's not quite as much my scene?

**Lulav:** Yeah.

**Jaz:** So, I could listen to it, but I just haven't ever gotten around to it.

**Lulav:** Yeah. I'm just scrolling through, and their first episode is a *Buffy* episode, but I don't think you've watched any of this other stuff, except for maybe *Lilo & Stitch*. (*laughs*)

**Jaz:** Thank you for that Consolation.

**Lulav:** Yeah. And so, in addition to the framework from the parsha of like, “the opposite of doing bad stuff isn't actually doing good stuff, and you need to do extra stuff on top of that,” maybe we could take a theme of decolonial futures, and making really cool cultures with each other? We talk a lot about— or at least we used to, and we've used these exact words a little less recently, but— we talk about how the Judaism of our children and grandchildren is going to be completely unintelligible to us, in the same way that ours is completely unintelligible to our parents and grandparents, and I like that idea of, things are going to be so weird and so cool, and even if we don't completely understand, we can still appreciate.

**Jaz:** Yeah. I picked that particular idea — of an unimaginable Jewish future — up from Rabbi Benay Lappe, the Svara founder, who tells a story of a Jewish demographer who came to talk to JTS when she was a rabbinical student there, who said, “The good news is that there will be Judaism in a hundred years, and the bad news is that it will be completely unrecognizable,” and she said, “And I want to posit that there was no bad news.” (*Lulav laughs*) And I just really loved that, and it stuck with me.

**Lulav:** I love that. So, can I start talking about the haftarah of parashat Eikev?

**Jaz:** Please, take us through it.



**Lulav:** So, we start off with Tzion kvetching about being forsaken, and Hashem is like, "Okay, come on. Can a woman forget her baby or disown the child of her womb?" And then, is like, "Hmm, actually, I guess that could happen, but though she might forget, I could never forget you."

**Jaz:** Okay, can we pause there for a second?

**Lulav:** Yes.

**Jaz:** There's, like, already a lot going on.

**Lulav:** There's so much going on already.

**Jaz:** Okay. So, we'll start with: what did this bring up for you? 'Cause it brought up some various different things for me.

**Lulav:** So, it brought up some stuff about the visceral ultimate importance of birth parents, and like, uhhh, that is not a thing that I necessarily believe in, but also not a thing that I am terribly qualified to speak on, because both of my legal parents are people who were involved in creating me?

**Jaz:** Mm-hmm.

**Lulav:** But it just seems, both for the child, and for the bearer of children, it doesn't seem right.

**Jaz:** Which doesn't seem right?

**Lulav:** The idea that "a woman cannot forget her baby or disown the child of her womb." 'Cause, like, disowning the child of your womb happens all the time, especially to trans kids.

**Jaz:** Sure.

**Lulav:** And from the other end of things, sometimes you are involved in creating a human, but you don't have the resources to take care of that human or the desire to do so. And like, this is just coming from a very family-centered, heteronormative perspective of, like, "having children is great, and you should always do it a whole bunch and then those children are yours forever." And I don't love that.

**Jaz:** Yeah. So, it reminds me of a whole buncha stuff. Brings up some things for me. Right?

**Lulav:** Please.

**Jaz:** So, on a personal level, I don't believe that a womb, or having come out of a womb, is the defining feature of what makes someone a parent, and it happens to be the case that I did come out of the womb of one of my parents, but not of the other of my parents, and... One, that's a normal thing to happen for children? Right? (*Lulav laughs*) You can only be born from one parent, no matter how many parents you have.

**Lulav:** Uh-huh.

**Jaz:** But two, my other parent is my mom, who isn't, like, biologically connected to me but is definitely my mom.

**Lulav:** And you're still a Blair.

**Jaz:** Yeah. My name is Jaz Blair Twersky, and the Twersky comes from one of my moms, and the Blair comes from the other side of the family.

**Lulav:** Yeah.

**Jaz:** And those are both my family. And then on the other side, my bio-dad did contribute genetic material to make me, and he's family. When my parents raised us with the understanding that like, he was family, but he wasn't like, our dad. That's different.

**Lulav:** Right.

**Jaz:** And did, technically, have to disown me. It was a requirement of the state of California, for him to do that, so that he wouldn't be my legal parent.

**Lulav:** Right.

**Jaz:** Then like, moving out some from my own family situation--

**Lulav:** Mm-hmm.

**Jaz:** I was just listening to an interesting podcast episode with an interview with a woman named Sophie Lewis, who has written a book called *Full Surrogacy Now: Feminism Against Family*.

**Lulav:** Okay.

**Jaz:** Which--I've read some reviews of, and I listened to her talk about it, and I don't know that I'm going to read it because it seems like something of an academic, abstruse read--

**Lulav:** Mm-hmm.

**Jaz:** --and not quite where I want to place that degree of energy and intensity at the moment, but it's an exploration of family abolition, which isn't an idea I'm so familiar with, or familiar deeply with the theory behind. But some of her focus is on the idea of surrogacy, right? Like, people who get paid to rent out their wombs, basically, and then turn the babies over to other people, and she's playing around with the idea of like, well, what if we thought of all baby-birthing as labor? Not just for surrogates, but for everybody, and what if we revamped the idea that biological connection implies ownership, and—

**Lulav:** Mm-hmm.

**Jaz:** —different things along those lines. So, if that is of interest to you, you should definitely go check it out and learn more about it. And yeah, I thought it is a fascinating idea, a more literal, like...if a baby comes out of your womb, but it's legally somebody else's,

**Lulav:** Mm-hmm.

**Jaz:** What do you do with that? And what could it imply about how we think about all systems, in ways that are messy and flawed and about ownership rather than autonomy? So, it just appears to be a starting point for a real place of trying to imagine something that is currently crazy, impossible, ridiculous, and I don't know that it gets that detailed, and I don't know how much I'd be on board with any part of it, but I do find it interesting. So.

**Lulav:** Yeah. I also do. Unfortunately, I am even less likely to read academic writing than you.

**Jaz:** Yes. Listen, if I wasn't about to start grad school (*Lulav laughs*) I'd consider picking it up, but, um...

**Lulav:** Yeah.

**Jaz:** I know my capabilities.

**Lulav:** Oh, you do? Okay. Good. I'm glad. I'm gonna check in with you in, like, two months and see how many additional projects you've picked up.

**Jaz:** This is a rude call-out (*Lulav laughs*) about how many things I do that I do not appreciate. Okay, I do kind of appreciate it, but... (*both laugh*) That doesn't mean that I'm gonna pick up a whole new academic text about something only tangentially related to my official line of study.

**Lulav:** I'll say you're right *and* valid *if* you admit that dairy coughs are real.

**Jaz:** Never.

**Lulav:** Oh, well, okay then. (*laughs*) Gives you a noogie. Anyway... Yeah, I think it's interesting that in line 15 here, there's this immediate admission of, like, "Yeah, okay, I guess she might forget." (*Jaz laughs*) "But I could never forget you."

**Jaz:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Lulav:** Just like, starting an analogy, and then being like, "I don't love this analogy but the underlying thing that I was saying is still true."

**Jaz:** It's like G-d heard all of our critiques and went, "Yeah, that's true. Acknowledged. But I'm still here!"

**Lulav:** Uh-huh.

**Jaz:** "Just listen to my point instead of the flawed analogy that I made."

**Lulav:** And like, that's the thing with it being a flawed analogy, is that the thing here is about somebody who intentionally gave birth to this child, intending to look over it, and make sure that it succeeds. "See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands, your walls are ever before me," i.e., I'm hanging your little kindergarten doodles on my refrigerator.

**Jaz:** Cute. (*Lulav laughs*) What's next?

**Lulav:** I'm not sure who "you" is in line 17, but it says, "Swiftly your children are coming. Those who ravaged and ruined you shall leave you." Basically this idea that the people that you care about, who you have had to invest energy and time into, like, coming to take care of you, and also, all of the forces — and specific people — who messed with you while you were in this really lonely, vulnerable place? That's not happening anymore. They're leaving. Get out of here.

**Jaz:** Okay.

**Lulav:** And so, "You must don them all like jewels, your children, and deck yourself with them like a bride."

**Jaz:** Ah--hmm. Hmm. Hmm.

**Lulav:** Yes?

**Jaz:** We've moved in from "your children are your property" to "your children are your accessories"? (*Lulav laughs*) And I don't necessarily feel better about that.

**Lulav:** Right. I dispute that we necessarily were talking about children as property, but this is definitely talking about them as property and accessories.

**Jaz:** Yes. Like, I do think that there are things to be said about the idea that, rather than jewels and specific things, the thing you take most pride and joy in are your children, and that does resonate with me as a particularly Jewish idea, like, you get *nakhes* from your children, and that a bride is usually brought in as, like, an analogy to indicate so much joy, and someone deserving of attention.

**Lulav:** Yeah. And the point of a wedding is not to make yourself look pretty in full of very expensive things, it's to celebrate your relationships with the people you care about.

**Jaz:** Yeah.

**Lulav:** So, deck yourself with your children, like a bride.

**Jaz:** Hmm.

**Lulav:** But, like a bride should be, not like this superficial application of bridedom.

**Jaz:** Yeah.

**Lulav:** Here's an interesting thing. Can you pick out what word in line 19 is getting translated as "settlers"?

**Jaz:** Oooh.

**Lulav:** Speaking of decolonial futures. (*laughs*) This is the line, while Jaz looks for it: "As for your ruins and desolate places and your land laid waste, you shall soon be crowded with settlers, while destroyers stay far from you."

**Jaz:** I think it's this word "*miyoshev*,"<sup>1</sup> from the root yod-shin-bet, which is "sit" or "dwell."

**Lulav:** Yeah. So, the English word "dwell" definitely feels different from the English word "settle," you know?

**Jaz:** Mmm.

---

<sup>1</sup> מְיוֹשֵׁב

**Lulav:** Because settlers means people who are coming into a place and declaring their own and, like, fashioning it after their likeness? Whereas those who dwell, those who, you know, sit down a while, are people who are living with the land and with the things around them. And I think that works better as a contrast to destroyers, the clause, "while destroyers stay far from you."

**Jaz:** So you might translate this not as "settlers," but as...inhabitants?

**Lulav:** Uhh..."dwellers" isn't a word, right?

**Jaz:** Yes, it is.

**Lulav:** Is it?

**Jaz:** Like "city-dwellers."

**Lulav:** Yeah, but it's..."dwellers" on its own is not a word that we use. You use modified "dwellers," like "city-dwellers."

**Jaz:** Yeah, but you could say the inhabitants, the residents, the--

**Lulav:** Oooh, "you shall soon be crowded with land-dwellers."

**Jaz:** Sure.

**Lulav:** Cool. Okay. But yeah, this contrast between destroying things and sitting with them is the best possible reading on this.

**Jaz:** I think that's interesting too, given what you were saying earlier about taking the model of *Métis in Space*, of looking at these earlier racist works and watching them, right?

**Lulav:** Also, a lot of them are, to be clear, contemporary racist works. (*laughs*)

**Jaz:** Okay. Thank you.

**Lulav:** But yes. Continue.

**Jaz:** And they're sitting with them, right? Like, that's what they're doing, is they're watching them and they're dealing with them, and, like, sitting with them.

**Lulav:** Mm-hmm. Yeah, and also, like, empathizing with the really one-dimensional native characters—

**Jaz:** Mm-hmm.

**Lulav:** —and telling little midrash about like, "Oh man, what if this entire story was just about this person instead?" (*laughs*)

**Jaz:** Yeah.

**Lulav:** So. "The children you thought you had lost shall yet say in your hearing, 'The place is too crowded for me. Make room for me to settle.'" Or to sit, I guess.

**Jaz:** Yeah, that's the same root.

**Lulav:** Ah. V'eshvah<sup>2</sup>?

**Jaz:** Yeah, the alef at the beginning indicates that it is first-person future singular.

**Lulav:** Right, so it's like, "Oh man, this house that you started off with? This is way too big, we've got to expand it, make it a place where all of us can live in community." And I think that's central to any lowercase-'z' zionist project: the idea of like, gathering all the disparate Jewish peoples into a place where they can be Jewish together. Any one place that you came from can no longer hold the people who left that place and became people of their own.

**Jaz:** Mmm. Say more about that?

**Lulav:** So, it talks here about the children you thought you had lost?

**Jaz:** Uh-huh.

**Lulav:** Which makes me think of, like, ah, the Babylonian captivity and all of the other things that created diaspora, where once you had a relatively singular culture, even though just one culture is kind of a myth?

**Jaz:** Right.

**Lulav:** But you used to have people who were very intimately related to each other, and then they went different directions, and they mixed with the local languages to make Yiddish, or Ladino, like... The ways in which people are Jewish differs everywhere that people are Jewish? And so, if you come back to your children, or even if you come back to your siblings, the place where you can dwell together needs to be larger.

**Jaz:** Mmm.

**Lulav:** If we want a religious community — and by community, I mean, like, at the level of a shul — if we want a religious community that isn't just Ashkenaz, but also has Jews of other backgrounds, and like, Jews who converted, bringing all of those people together requires a larger place that is made for the people.

**Jaz:** Mmm.

**Lulav:** You know?

**Jaz:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Lulav:** And line 21 is talking about this shock at like, "Oh man, where did all these kids come from, when I was bereaved and barren, exiled in disdain? How could all of these different people who are their own people have happened? And thusly, says Hashem, it will raise its hand in nations and lift up my ensign to peoples," to, like, bring people back together, basically.

**Jaz:** Isn't this—? I haven't read it, don't yell at me, listeners. But isn't this thing of like, "But I couldn't have children, and I was barren, and that's what I wanted, and so, where are all of these other children coming from who say they are my children?" Um, isn't this the plot of *Detransition, Baby*?

**Lulav:** I haven't read it either, and I don't know what it's about. (*both laugh*) So I cannot help you there.

**Jaz:** My understanding secondhand is that, among being a story about the plot of womanhood and also motherhood is included about, like, what makes someone a real mother, that includes, like, all of these other people saying, like, "Yes, we're not your biological children, but you did mother us"?

**Lulav:** Wow, you have seen much more explicit discourse about *Detransition, Baby* than I have.

**Jaz:** Oh my G-d, so much of it. (*Lulav laughs*) It hasn't been my focus to read, partially because it does seem very interested in exploring different kinds of, like, questions about the nature of womanhood?

**Lulav:** Mmm.



**Jaz:** And that is not my focus or primary interest in reading at the moment.

**Lulav:** Right.

**Jaz:** So. But what's going on with this next bit about kings?

**Lulav:** So, yeah. "Kings shall tend to your children; their queens shall serve you as nurses." Basically, what the diaspora meant is that all of these people who considered themselves authorities and better than the people they were conquering, they're not actually that special. Like, anybody can be child-carers, if they try hard and mean well enough. Which is not to disparage childcare. That's a lot of really impressive skills. But like, just because you're a king doesn't mean you definitionally can't take care of a child.

**Jaz:** Sure.

**Lulav:** And so, this vision of the future is one where the people who set themselves above you are now helping out with your community.

**Jaz:** Yeah.

**Lulav:** And the way it phrases this is, "They shall bow to you, face to the ground, and lick the dust of your feet," which—I don't love the implication of ourselves becoming kings?

**Jaz:** Right.

**Lulav:** This is in a future where we have reversed the iniquity, but then went further, and instead of choosing goodness, chose humiliation. Which like, some people are into. (*both laugh*) Wrapping back around, yet again, to pornoprophetics. But. Yeah. I just am uncomfortable with making people bow, instead of being like, "Hey, we were kind of on our own. Can you help out with childcare now, because you are no longer the kings? Bye."

**Jaz:** It's vaguely reminiscent, I think, for me, of like, "Well, what do you want Jeff Bezos to do, once we succeed in taking away all his money and power?" I'm like, I dunno. I don't actually want him to do childcare, I don't think he'd be very good at it.

**Lulav:** (*laughs*) That's the thing, yeah.

**Jaz:** I recognize that, also, nothing's gonna happen to him, but if it did, you know, what would you want him to do? So, that feels like those sort of type of questions that it's doing, and that the thing it's answering is like, kings and queens would have had other people doing stuff for them of this nature, so it seems like the sort of like, he should have to work in

a factory, with terrible hours or whatever, even though, also, you might say, nobody should have to do that.

**Lulav:** Okay, so, I think, personally, what I would want from Jeff Bezos is to have a completely normal life like anybody else in our glorious future, except for he is only allowed to pee into bottles or into his clothes, and he is not allowed to sit down for more than two minutes at a time.

**Jaz:** Okay, but the implication of that does require there to be cops enforcing that, so...

**Lulav:** Or: anybody he interacts with can just heckle the shit out of him. (*both laugh*)

**Jaz:** Okay.

**Lulav:** Figuring out how to actually find a measure of justice, while also pursuing a world that is actually better—

**Jaz:** Wild.

**Lulav:** —which is part of what it means to find just— uh, yeah. It— it's hard.

**Jaz:** Yeah. Okay, so.

**Lulav:** I also do want to bring it back to *otipêyimisiw-iskwêwak kihci-kîsikohk*, because one of the things they constructed in their show mythology is that when all of the natives went to space and had a glorious future, all of the moniyâw, the white people, just, like, forgot how to do things and were completely useless, and then they were like, "Hey, can you help us?" and they were like, "Mmm, okay, but you gotta do exactly what we say this time." (*Jaz laughs*) Which is maybe a misstatement, but that is what I remember from 20 or 30 episodes.

**Jaz:** Okay.

**Lulav:** (*laughs*) Definitely there are some revenge fantasies, but the real thing is, if these people are still around, they gotta be the minority culture and work towards a better world instead of just working for themselves.

**Jaz:** Mmm.

**Lulav:** And that's part of what I meant, I guess, when I said Jeff Bezos should live a completely normal life.

**Jaz:** Right.

**Lulav:** I dunno, be a person, dude. Instead of having unimaginable amounts of wealth that are made by, like, "absorbing the excess value of people's labor instead of allowing it to go to them".

**Jaz:** Yeah.

**Lulav:** Okay, so. "Those who trusted me shall not be shamed. Can spoil be taken from the warrior or captors retrieved from the victor?"

**Jaz:** Evidently.

**Lulav:** Yeah, I guess. Okay, so... What this is saying is: when people win, they take all this stuff, but like, let's take the long view. "Captives shall be taken from a warrior, spoils shall be retrieved from a tyrant." Your adversaries aren't actually anything.

**Jaz:** Yeah.

**Lulav:** And the more powerful they get, the more they're gonna squabble with themselves, to the point that I will make your oppressors eat their own flesh; they shall be drunk with their own blood as with wine. Like, when you base a society on extracting all of the goodness from people and turning it into piddling amounts of profit, eventually all of the people at the top who have honed this into an absolute art just mess with each other, and there's nothing left, because they're all sucking each other's blood instead of, like, stealing wine.

**Jaz:** *Creepy vampirism!*

**Lulav:** So, Hashem is like, "Okay, so if you think that I divorced your mom and sold you to creditors, where's that bill of divorce? Which of the creditors was it exactly? No no no. The fact that you were sold off, it was only for the specific bad things that you did." And this is a thing that I'm having trouble reading, because initially, the tack that I took with it was like, "Where is all this proof of me abandoning you? I didn't abandon you," but instead it says, "You *were* sold off for your sins and your mother dismissed for your crimes," so, like, eh? Looking through these next couple lines, it seems like a lot of the onus is put on the Jewish people to, like, be ready to make a better life?

**Jaz:** Mmm.

**Lulav:** Hashem is like, "Is my arm too short to rescue people? Listen, with a mere rebuke I dry up the sea, fish are just, like, flopping in the seabed that's left behind. I am so powerful.

You think that I couldn't rescue you if I wanted to?" Which, you know, I don't love, but I also understand the thing here that's like, you have to be responsible. You have to be ready to help each other and live that better life, instead of just falling apart. Do you feel any sort of way about these last couple lines?

**Jaz:** So, I was trying to puzzle through some commentary about them, that looks at some, like, stuff about, like, well, if there wasn't a technical formal divorce, then you could reconcile without all the legal paperwork, basically.

**Lulav:** Hmm.

**Jaz:** So we can all be reconciled.

**Lulav:** Oh, it's like...your moms separated from each other, but they can come back together if they decide that they want to make another go of it.

**Jaz:** Sure.

**Lulav:** Because they didn't actually get divorced. Okay.

**Jaz:** Yes, I think, is the implication.

**Lulav:** Also, to be clear, not *your* moms.

**Jaz:** No no no, my mothers are very happy together.

**Lulav:** Yeah. (*laughs*)

**Jaz:** Though there is a thing, which is, like, interesting as, like, an artifact of history, right? About how, because queer people couldn't get married, they also didn't go through the same things of divorce, so, like, if somebody got, like, I dunno, emotionally married in the 90s, but not legally married, and then they split up, they didn't then divorce, like, you didn't have to go through a formal divorce process.

**Lulav:** You do have to hire Joyce Wishnia, though. To like, hammer out the separation process.

**Jaz:** This joke went over my head.

**Lulav:** Sorry, Joyce Wishnia is a character from *The L Word*, played by Jane Lynch, who has also played that one coach from *Glee*.

**Jaz:** Oh, right. I'm sure my parents, who watched *The L Word*, would think that was a very funny joke, but I don't know it.

**Lulav:** (*laughs*) That's very fair.

**Jaz:** So, the next bit is about rebukes clothing the skies in blackness.

**Lulav:** Mm-hmm.

**Jaz:** "'Can I not save you?' says G-d." Then, there's this bit about like, "G-d gave me a skilled tongue—"

**Lulav:** It seems like that's going into Yeshiyahu talking.

**Jaz:** Yes, it does seem like this is Isaiah's words now, rather than G-d speaking as Isaiah, because it explicitly says "G-d gave this to me."

**Lulav:** Right. I think, offering a counterexample to the thing that the voice of Hashem was lamenting in line 2 of chapter 50, where it's like, "Hey, instead of just backing off and letting chips fall as they may, Hashem gave me a skilled tongue. I know how to speak timely words to the weary, morning-by-morning, and my ears were opened, and I didn't disobey. I didn't run away. I offered my back to the floggers — I opened myself up to some punishment — but because I put part of myself on the line, we get to have a better future. Hashem will help me, therefore I feel no disgrace." Do you think that's an okay interpretation?

**Jaz:** I do.

**Lulav:** And then he's like, "Come on, do a legal battle with me. I will filibuster the courts for so long, even though filibustering is not actually a thing in courts. You're just never going to get a verdict against me."

**Jaz:** Uh-huh.

**Lulav:** "I have hand-tailored shirts, and y'all are just fast fashion and are gonna be full of holes." (*both laugh*)

**Jaz:** I love that. Yes.

**Lulav:** Okay, so, it's drawing it back, in line 50:10, to kind of the thesis that I was talking about, where, even though someone is walking in darkness and doesn't have light, let him trust, you know?

**Jaz:** Mmm.

**Lulav:** Rely upon a better future, when a better future is what's being acted for.

**Jaz:** Beautiful.

**Lulav:** Are firebrands good or bad here? (*Jaz laughs*) I literally can't tell, in line 50:11.

**Jaz:** Wanna read it for our listeners?

**Lulav:** "But you are all kindlers of fire, girding on firebrands. Walk by the blaze of your fire by the brands that you have lit. This has come to you from my hand. You shall lie down in pain."

**Jaz:** So, Rashi definitely thinks that the fire's a bad thing. Kindling the fire of G-d's wrath.

**Lulav:** Mmm.

**Jaz:** You walk by the blaze of your fire and be hurt by it.

**Lulav:** Okay. Yeah.

**Jaz:** So, Rashi's coming in to clarify that, because it does not on the face of it make obvious sense.

**Lulav:** Right, because, like, a lot of the places in which we have encountered G-d on the page have been involving fire, but this really evokes—

**Jaz:** Right.

**Lulav:** —a more subtle imagery, the G-d that's there in the vastness of the dark.

**Jaz:** Mmm.

**Lulav:** The G-d that's like, the ground beneath your feet as you walk, trusting your inner balance and proprioception and scent and hearing more than you do your sight.

**Jaz:** Mmm.

**Lulav:** And so, to light fires in the middle of that — to, like, turn on a light, when you're not doing it to, like, preserve your eyes or anything like that, but just because you want to turn on a light in a room? That's bad.

**Jaz:** Mmm.

**Lulav:** Wags finger. And this definitely makes sense to me, that, "you shall lie down in pain," because sometimes, I'll turn on a light, and I won't need the overhead light, but when I lie down, I'm looking up directly into it, and it hurts and it overstimulates me and basically makes my life bad, and like, what if I didn't do that?

**Jaz:** Yeah.

**Lulav:** Okay, so we come to the last three lines here. "Listen to me, you who pursue justice." So, in Hebrew it's "shimu alai rodfei tzedek."<sup>3</sup> [47:38] So you may have heard, "tzedek, tzedek, tirdof," before, and "rodfei" is the same root, right?

**Jaz:** Uh-huh.

Also, interestingly, that root is about, like, pursuit and pursuer.

**Lulav:** Mm-hmm.

**Jaz:** And it also comes up in Jewish discussions of abortion.

**Lulav:** Mm! How so?

**Jaz:** Because you are commanded to abort a fetus if it is pursuing the life of the mother.

**Lulav:** Mmm! Interesting.

**Jaz:** So, if it's gonna kill you to give birth, you have to not give birth.

**Lulav:** Okay.

**Jaz:** And the way that this is reasoned out is sort of the same way that most self defense rules in Judaism get reasoned out, with this idea of a rodef, a pursuer.

**Lulav:** Mm-hmm.

**Jaz:** Which, in this case, is a fetus. But there is also, like, a nuance added of, like, the fetus isn't quite a person yet, but it is definitely a pursuer.

**Lulav:** Right.

---

<sup>3</sup> שִׁמְעוּ אֵלַי רֹדְפֵי צֶדֶק

**Jaz:** And it's worthy of value and consideration, because it has the potential to turn into a person, but that's not to say that it is a person.

**Lulav:** Yeah. And I'm trying to remember what the conclusion was on that bit about if a thief comes in the night, or not in the night, or whatever, what you're supposed to do then? But in general, the, like, textual commandment stuff is to do the absolute least to maintain your okayness.

**Jaz:** Right, you're really not supposed to kill people, but if they attack you, or if they're being home intruders, they have reasonably understood that they have put themselves in danger.

**Lulav:** Mm-hmm.

**Jaz:** Because they are putting you in danger, or if they're coming into your home like that, you might be reasonably expected to think they're putting you in danger.

**Lulav:** Mm-hmm.

**Jaz:** Which is why the police's no-knock warrants are so horrible.

**Lulav:** Amongst other reasons. *(laughs)*

**Jaz:** Amidst other reasons, yes. Not to imply that that's the only reason they're bad.

**Lulav:** Right. Okay, so, these last three lines are talking about, like, if you wanna pursue justice, look where you came from, which is interesting to me, considering that it asks you to look back to Sarah, who brought you forth.

**Jaz:** Mm-hmm.

**Lulav:** And it's like, she kicked out the other woman and her young child and would have left them with no water or shelter or food.

**Jaz:** That doesn't seem to be the thing that they're referring to at the moment, though.

**Lulav:** Well, yeah, it's not the thing that they're referring to, but did she ever, like, make up for that?

**Jaz:** One, no. Two, I actually do believe, and I think so do you, that there's value in looking at where you came from and even including the mistakes of your predecessors, and doing



some of the work in your own community, rooted in where you come from and your own history, and like, investigating your own past.

**Lulav:** Mm-hmm.

**Jaz:** And I think that the point they're trying to make here, whether or not this is a great example, is the, like, there weren't a lot of them, but they stuck with it, and if you're pursuing justice, you should also stick with it, even if there's not a lot of you.

**Lulav:** Okay. That makes a lot of sense. Where it's not saying, like, "look to these people as a moral example", but "look to these people and see how they went from literally two people alone in the world to the progenitors of a huge culture."

**Jaz:** Yeah.

**Lulav:** Okay. Thank you. "Truly Hashem has comforted Tzion, and made her wilderness like Eden. The wild, potentially scary places are fruitful. The potentially horribly barren and inhospitable places are relatively chill. Gladness and joy shall abide there." We good?

**Jaz:** We're good. And on that note, I think it's time to Rate G-d's Writing,

**Lulav:** Mm-hmm.

**Jaz:** The segment in which we look at the wilderness and try to put some joyous organization into place.

**Lulav:** Mm. Okay. Let's say that 30 hin of silver is an appropriate daily wage for childcare.

**Jaz:** Okay.

**Lulav:** How much are you paying the caretakers as described in this haftarah? Out of 30 hin of silver per day.

**Jaz:** Temporarily, I guess, we're paying them 30 hin of silver, because that's a fair wage, and we were just instructed to do things properly? But theoretically, we would like to pay them zero, because we're really trying to work towards a world without money.

**Lulav:** Oooh. That's fun.

**Jaz:** But at the moment we're paying them 30, 'cuz we're not actually there yet.

**Lulav:** Mm-hmm. Because you are the one with the wealth to compensate them for a specific task, instead of, like, society making sure that everybody has their needs covered.

**Jaz:** Yes.

**Lulav:** Okay. Very interesting. Do you have a scale for me?

**Jaz:** I do. So, in this one, you are a kindler of fire.

**Lulav:** Oh no.

**Jaz:** What would you light on fire because of this haftarah?

**Lulav:** Okay. I just realized how much flammable material I have in my room right now.

**Jaz:** Mm-hmm. Many things are flammable.

**Lulav:** (*laughs*) I think I am kindling fire with my top shelf of books, which is ones that are personally very relevant to me, including being very specific copies. I'm looking at my copy of *Watership Down*, which was the one that I read when I was like, 10, from my middle school library, and then I got it when the middle school library decommissioned it. But like, the story is what's important. It's not the actual thing that I would be setting aflame. So like, if I need to kindle a fire—which this haftarah seems to imply that I don't. But if I needed to, I think I would burn the most important books, because at least then I'm making that intentional decision, and that that sacrifice has to be worth it.

**Jaz:** Hmm. Beautiful.

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

**Jaz:** I can. Thanks for listening to Kosher Queers. If you like what you've heard, you can support us on Patreon at [patreon.com/kosherqueers](https://patreon.com/kosherqueers), which will give you bonus content and help us keep making this for you. Also, if you can't commit to ongoing support but would still like to contribute, you can give to our Ko-fi, which is at [ko-fi.com/kosherqueers](https://ko-fi.com/kosherqueers). Find out more information about our podcast, including bios for our team and links to our social media, at [kosherqueers.gay](https://kosherqueers.gay). Also, please spread the word about Kosher Queers. 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 albums, they're great. Our sound production this week is done by our excellent audio editor, Ezra Faust.

**Lulav:** Excellent indeed. He picked up the latter two-thirds of, I think, episode 89, to make sure that Jaz and I could spend a bunch of time together. Love you, Ezra. You're great. Jaz

Twersky makes sure that every episode gets transcribed. Thanks to JJ Jensen, who you can find @pantspossum on Twitter. You can find the link to the transcripts that JJ writes and Jaz proofreads in our episode descriptions at [kosherqueers.gay](http://kosherqueers.gay), where you can also see if Jaz roped in different help for the episode.

**Jaz:** I'm Jaz Twersky, and 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 Dakota.

**Both:** Have a lovely queer Jewish day.

*(Brivele outro)*

**Lulav:** This week's gender is: dairy coughs.

**Jaz:** This week's pronouns are: mil/milch.