

11 — Vayigash: Shepherds Abhorrent

Content note: From 34:00-35:11, discussion of modern racism and antisemitism.

Jaz: Hey Lulav, how are you feeling about Jewish things in the world right now? (*Lulav groans deeply and dramatically*) Yeah me too. Hope all of you are powering through out there. We're going to talk about recommendations of cool Jewish and queer media stuff that we've been into this year instead, to start off 2020 properly, so Lulav, what's something cool that you've been reading/watching/listening to?

Lulav: Honestly, this is a much better idea, yeah. So I have the book *A Rainbow Thread* by Noam Sienna.

Jaz: Yes!

Lulav: It is an anthology of queer Jewish texts from the 1st century to 1969 and, in information that you can't just get from reading off the front cover, it's a collection of historical evidence that there have always been queer people in Judaism —

Jaz: Hell yeah

Lulav: That there continue to be, and that there will continue to be. It ranges from this person was tried for the crime of sodomy and executed by Christians to that midrash that Jaz was talking about regarding what was the sex of Adam. Also, there's some lesbian poetry from 1969 literally written on the isle of Lesbos.

Jaz: That's beautiful. I love that.

Lulav: Yeah, so there's just a wonderful range of things and I actually got this signed by Noam.

Jaz: Neat

Lulav: And also tentatively asked him way before we actually started the podcast if he'd be willing to come on the podcast and I got a noncommittal yes, so (*laugh*)

Jaz: Oh, we should follow up on that.

Lulav: Yeah. But he signed it, "For Lulav and Tova. To a colorful and Jewish future."

Jaz: Aw!

Lulav: And it was just cute. The one last thing that I want to do here is read that last paragraph of the introduction.

Jaz: Okay

Lulav: "To all those who did not live to see this book, I hope it does honor to your memory. To all those who find themselves in the pages: may it give you courage to continue living, loving, and fighting for a better future. And to all those who will come after: may the violence and fear present in these stories belong only to the very distant past."

Jaz: That's beautiful.

Lulav: It really is.

Jaz: I haven't read it yet. It is on my to-read list and people keep sending me things about it. And when it first came out like 10 different people were like, "Hey, have you heard about this book?" And I was like, "Yes, I have." But nobody bought it for me

Lulav: Oh no.

Jaz: And I didn't spring for it, and I was like, "Hmm, I guess I gotta buy this book at some point," but it's hard for me sometimes to justify buying books, even books I really want, because my house is already overflowing with books that I own and haven't read yet that are also really good books, so.

Lulav: *(laughs)* Noam is local to Minneapolis, so I bought his book when he was at a talk at um, the rich people place. Macalester? *(Jaz laughs)* Is that right?

Jaz: That's a school, yeah.

Lulav: I think it's Macalester

Jaz: I almost went to school at Macalester.

Lulav: Yeah, there was a talk at Macalester and Tova and I went to that, and I bought his book because it sounded so cool.

Jaz: It does sound really cool.

Lulav: And I haven't read it cover to cover but the skimming that I've done and occasionally picking out pieces — I just love it so much.

Jaz: That's very cool. I just have one question about it. Maybe you don't know the answer, but there was a piece of historical text that I have heard, a poem from hundreds of years ago, written by someone who probably, were they alive today, would be a Jewish trans woman, that was written about how there's one prayer in the morning that traditionally says, "G-d, who has not made me a woman" and different modern denominations have taken that and changed it in various different ways (*Lulav laughs*) but this person wrote a poem about that line and it's just this beautiful lament about wrestling with that line.

Lulav: Yeah

Jaz: And being like, how do I give thanks for a thing that I do not feel thankful for?

Lulav: Yeah. It seems to be the poetry of Qalonymus ben Qalonymos.

Jaz: Yes!

Lulav: From Provence in 1323.

Jaz: Yes!

Lulav: So yeah, if you buy *A Rainbow Thread* you can find that on page 78.

Jaz: Cool.

Lulav: Thanks for sharing that Jaz. What's your big thing?

Jaz: So I also want to start by recommending a book, and it's called *It's a Whole Spiel: Love, Latkes, and Other Jewish Stories*. It was edited by Katherine Locke and Laura Silverman with a forward by Mayim Bialik, and it's an anthology, so it's got stories by a whole bunch of different authors and it's mostly YA short stories about Jewish characters. Some of them are Jewish queer characters but not all of them, although I think the first one is and I'm into it. I just enjoy it a lot. My friend Q gave it to me for my birthday.

Lulav: Oh Q!

Jaz: Yeah. And I really really love this book. I like, tore through it. There's just not all that many stories that you run into that are Jewish young people who you can always relate to.

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: And also, I think Q got it at a convention, and so I have it signed by a bunch of different authors on their stories and stuff, but even without that, there is this story about a girl who goes to college and she's grown up in a very Jewish environment and is like, I do not want to be the Jewish kid and I want to make friends with a bunch of different people, and then is like, "I don't know how to do this. I actually like my people" and is very nervous about trying to interact with other people who don't understand her references and then finds out that maybe it'd be okay to still spend some time with Jews.

Lulav: Yeah, that sounds good.

Jaz: Also there's one where a couple gay kids call in love at Jewish summer camps, and I'm like —

Lulav: Yes!

Jaz: Great. Great. *(laughs)*

Lulav: *(laugh)* Yeah I hadn't heard of that I don't think until you brought it up earlier today, but I am so hyped to read that?

Jaz: Yeah, it's great.

Lulav: We should do a book swap at some point.

Jaz: Oh yeah.

Lulav: Or I could see if my library has that, and request it if it doesn't.

Jaz: Yeah. But also. Lulav, so you have another recommendation for us?

Lulav: Yeah. The prompt was Jewish or queer media that we've enjoyed from the last year.

Jaz: Yeah.

Lulav: And I was looking through my Netflix history and it turns out that a lot of the stuff I watch is as a method of self-harm rather than because I genuinely enjoy it and it speaks to me *(laughs)* so that's fun. But there were two specifically queer pieces of media that I watched and enjoyed. The first one is the 2019 film *Daddy Issues*, showing on Netflix, which is not a movie I can in good conscience recommend, especially if you had any hesitation whatsoever upon hearing that title

Jaz: I definitely did.

Lulav: *(laugh)* Yeah. It was interesting though and I think I liked the cinematography.

Jaz: Mm.

Lulav: And then the other thing was the 2010 movie *Yes or No?* along with I think two sequels which I haven't watched. It is a cute Thai lesbian romance with an actual butch romantic interest.

Jaz: Ooh.

Lulav: A lot of the plot hinges on internalized homophobia and also some nonsense directed against said butch romantic interest

Jaz: Mm.

Lulav: But! But overall it was really sweet and genuine and I wholeheartedly recommend it despite it being from nine years ago and not less than one.

Jaz: Yeah.

Lulav: What about you Jaz? Do you have any runners-up?

Jaz: Yeah! And I didn't think of them as runners-up, but just additional things. And I'll just throw in a couple, and then I thought we could make a longer version of this to give to our patrons, so you can see more Jewish and queer things we enjoyed. Lots of the things I enjoy are Jewish and or queer, so. *(laugh)* But I thought I'd throw some music on there.

Lulav: Ooh! Yes.

Jaz: So one of them is a little more on the Jewish side of things just in terms of what you find in the actual music, but there is a musician and all-around incredible person whose name is Anat Hochberg whose album is coming out shortly. Don't remember exactly her release date. She may have been on my mind in part because I was just finishing up some very delicious baklava that she gave me the other day, right before we recorded. *(laugh)* She's also a very talented musician and you should also check out her work and I'll link to her stuff.

Lulav: I'm so glad.

Jaz: And the other one is not Jewish but Spotify gives you your end of the year playlist *(Lulav giggles)* and I was like, wow I guess I've been listening to this artist a lot, Hi I'm Case

Lulav: Hmm.

Jaz: And they're a trans singer and probably my favorite song is called "Spring Cleaning," which has a very fun music video about coming out but also by cleaning out your closet?

Lulav: Oh, I might know that.

Jaz: Yeah.

Lulav: Is the artist transfeminine?

Jaz: Yeah.

Lulav: Oh, I totally saw that like two years ago or something.

Jaz: Right, yeah. That's probably right, but this does not feel like it has to be things that came out this year, just that I listened to this year.

Lulav: Yeah

Jaz: And apparently this is one of the things I listened to this year.

Lulav: Good.

Jaz: But they have another song there, I think that's called "Monsters Nearby," that it looked like I listened to more, and I enjoyed that more, and I just had a line stuck in my head from it which goes, like, beforehand they're talking about monsters biting in the dark or whatever, and then the line goes like, "why don't you bite back?" and then it goes, "that's nice, I've tried, but the metaphor doesn't work like that." (*both chuckle*) And I just enjoyed that.

Lulav: Cute. Also, speaking of music, King Princess said bottom rights.

Jaz: Yeah, alright. Yes. Good choice.

[Brivele theme music]

Lulav: Welcome to Kosher Queens, 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 Vayigash.

Jaz: Mm hmm. Which is an interesting parsha.

Lulav: Oh?

Jaz: Are you ready for this summary?

Lulav: Not quite! How much time do you want?

Jaz: I actually think I can do this one real fast.

Lulav: So like 45?

Jaz: Yeah.

Lulav: Three, two, one, go!

Jaz: Judah convinces Joseph of his true change of heart by invoking dad, Joseph comes out to his brothers and they're like, "Is it a ghost?" Joseph says, "Excuse you, my eyes look just like my full, real sibling," and weeps, and now they're all back on speaking terms! Israel — the dude, not the nation — comes down, (*Lulav chuckles*) they bring the whole tribe, there are so many of them and we get literally so many names, and then they all move to Egypt, where there is still famine and starvation, and Israel says he can die happy now that he's seen his son, but also that his life has been kinda miserable. Also, Joseph takes everybody's stuff and land and nationalizes it, by making basically the whole population sell themselves into slavery except for the priests who have government healthcare. Done.

Lulav: You did it in 35 seconds.

Jaz: Heck yeah.

Lulav: Amazing. (*Jaz laughs*) Yeah, we're definitely going to talk about that last part.

Jaz: Yeah.

Lulav: But lets talk about the whole thing!

Jaz: Great! We begin while one sibling is still locked up and they still don't know who Joseph is and Judah comes to Joseph and says, "Please, please, let us go. You're like the Pharaoh and listen, here is everything that you told us to do and we did all of the things you told us to do and when we went back to our father to say we have to bring down Benjamin because this dude who is like the Pharaoh said so, we promised that we would not leave him there. It will kill our dad. So please do not make that happen."

Lulav: And what does he promise?

Jaz: And then he promises that he would stay there instead. Judah would stay there and they'd just have to let Benjamin go.

Lulav: *(laugh)* Yeah, Which, that totally follows from his mindset in the last episode.

Jaz: Uh huh

Lulav: And this whole bit here feels like, "Last time on Bereishit!"

Jaz: Right. It's like a quick montage sequence on catching you up in case you missed the last one.

Lulav: Yeah, and I like that. It's a good summary.

Jaz: It's a pretty good summary and also, since we ended on a cliffhanger, it's like, you needed to have seen the last episode so you can understand what's going on in this one. *(Lulav laughs)* Any thought about this one?

Lulav: No. I've got a thing on 45:3 after Yosef jumps out of the dumpster and says, "You've just been punk'd."

Jaz: Yeah, alright. We have a catch-up scene and Judah gives this whole rendition, but the new bit of information in there was he says, "I will stay and also it's gonna murder my dad if we leave Binyamin here," so then he says to the people around him, "Send everybody else out of the room, and he's like, crying, and the Egyptians, who are not in the room anymore, hear him from outside and then he says to his brothers, cuz he wants to ask more about his dad, he says, "I am Joseph! Is my father really alive?" Not our father, but "is *my* father really alive?" And they all are like, "What? What?!" And they recoil in fear.

Lulav: So my question there is why are they recorded as being dismayed at his presence?

Jaz: Does your thing say "dismayed?"

Lulav: Yeah, that part of the line says "But his brothers could not answer him, so dismayed were they at his presence." What does yours say?

Jaz: Huh. "But his brothers were unable to answer him — they recoiled in fear of him."

Lulav: Okay! Alright. That's quite the translation difference with the same effect.

Jaz: We should look it up. I should double check that word. Also, I went to this talk a while back that was talking about how siblings interact with each other in the Torah and this thing about how Joseph's brothers, earlier on in the story of Joseph, couldn't speak civilly to him, that it's this breakdown of could they talk to each other or not, and that there is this rendition of when can siblings talk to each other or not

Lulav: Okay.

Jaz: That there is an echo there of Cain and Abel, who couldn't talk to each other either.

Lulav: Yeah, okay, that's fair

14:14

Jaz: But part of what I make of it is that there is this dynamic of can they talk to each other yet? And they can't yet.

Lulav: Okay. Then what happens, Jaz?

Jaz: Then, he tells them not to be afraid and to come closer and he explains more of what happens. He doesn't just go, "I'm Joseph" but instead he says, "Here is who I am and how I got here. I was sold but I'm doing okay and it was because G-d knew that I would do good things here to keep us all alive, including you, so it's not you who sent me here but the Gd who made me a father to Pharaoh, a lord to all his household, a ruler of the whole land of Egypt."

Lulav: Which is a very positive and forgiving outlook, honestly.

Jaz: It is a very positive outlook. So he says, "So, tell my dad! So he can see!" And he embraces Benjamin and then they cry together. And then he hugs all his other brothers and then they can speak together. (*Lulav laughs*) Only after that could his brothers respond to him.

Lulav: I had feelings about that. Do you know Barbara Kruger's 1994 work, *Untitled*, where there are a bunch of dudes sitting on a thing and touching and it has the caption, "You construct intricate rituals which allow you to touch the skin of other men"?

Jaz: Mm. I'm not familiar with it but I am pulling it up. Who is it by?

Lulav: Barbara Kruger. If you look up "intricate rituals" there is a copy of it on know your meme dot com.

Jaz: Oh my G-d.

Lulav: Because that was a thing on tumblr 2015 to 2018. But like, the thing that I'm thinking about is not like, oh this is repressed homosexuality or anything. The thing that I'm thinking about is specifically the difference between intimate contact between men of modern American culture and basically anything else. (*chuckles*)

Jaz: Mm hmm.

Lulav: And it's really touching that he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept while Benjamin wept upon his neck.

Jaz: Yeah.

Lulav: And they're all just kissing. And they're okay with touching each other.

Jaz: Yes, but also they're only doing so while weeping, in this vein of, you can touch in exceptional circumstances, and I feel like we do see that still in modern culture to some extent, right, there are sort of permitted exceptions.

Lulav: Yeah, definitely the exceptional circumstances. That's like, the point of that Barbara Kruger work.

Jaz: Yeah

Lulav: Huh. But yeah, I just felt like commenting on the intimacy here.

Jaz: Yeah. Yeah, it can be lovely. Okay, next they go and the Egyptians, who have been I guess listening at the door, announce to the rest of the palace that his brothers are there and Pharaoh's like, "Oh cool, you should have them all come here," and so —

Lulav: I want to be clear that Yosef is just a messy crier. They weren't waiting just outside. They were a ways away and still heard him talking. (*laughs*)

Jaz: That's very fun. But okay, so the part that I thought was funny, tell me if this felt relevant to you, is Joseph just told his whole family to like come and move without asking the Pharaoh, and then the Pharaoh hears that Joseph's family is here and says "Oh, they should come move here."

Lulav: Yeah. Which is nice and also, I'm glad it worked out that way.

Jaz: Right.

Lulav: I mean, Yosef is acting with the license of the Pharaoh. The things he says are like unto the Pharaoh saying it, but it's good that they agree on that particular point

Jaz: Yeah. *(laugh)* It's also kinda like when you bring something home and you're like, "Mom, can we adopt it?"

Lulav: Oh G-d.

Jaz: In full confidence that your mom is gonna say yeah, "We can adopt it."

Lulav: Yeah, that later half is very important.

Jaz: Yeah.

Lulav: The "in full confidence." *(laugh)*

Jaz: Yeah. And then the brothers set about moving down, and he gives them a bunch of things to get them ready and he gives Benjamin the most things, and then he sends some things specifically for his dad and he says, "Don't be worried, just, on your way!" And then they go up from Egypt and they tell their father that Joseph's still alive and he doesn't believe them.

Lulav: Yeah. Does the way that the donkeys are laden by sex tell you anything about how Yosef or the writer's society sees gender?

Jaz: Ooh.

Lulav: Specifically, my translation says "10 donkeys loaded with the good things of Egypt, and 10 female donkeys loaded with grain, bread, and provision for his father on the journey."

Jaz: Ooh. That's a great question. Mine doesn't translate it as "the good things of Egypt." Mine translates it as "fine Egyptians goods."

Lulav *(fantasy merchant voice)*: Fine Egyptian wares, direct from Orzammar.

Jaz: Right. And maybe it does, but the other thing that seems relevant about it is here are all of the fine Egyptian goods but the thing they came down for was food. *(Lulav giggles)* Like, the thing that they need to survive is the food. The female donkeys are carrying the useful things and the things they really needed, and the male donkeys are carrying the fancy but ultimately kind of extraneous things.

Lulav: Okay. Because on first reading, I read it as the male donkeys get to carry the good things and be like, oh, these presents, and the female donkeys are responsible for actually feeding everybody.

Jaz: I think that that is a correct interpretation.

Lulav: Both of those interpretations are interwoven. I like that.

Jaz: Yeah. I do think that the male donkeys get all of the prestigious things and all of the things that indicate he's in charge now and all of the things they can use to prove some kind of point, but also they would not continue to exist without the things that the female donkeys are carrying.

Lulav: Mm hmm.

Jaz: Okay, but did you have anything about the reaction, when he says Joseph is alive and he doesn't know if Joseph is really alive?

Lulav: Do you have anything that you wanted in particular to say there?

Jaz: I don't, but only because I didn't look it up beforehand soon enough. But I am curious what your translation says specifically, because mine says, "his heart froze" and I didn't check the Hebrew.

Lulav: "He was stunned. He could not believe them."

Jaz: Hmm. Okay. *(pause)*

Lulav: Wow, that's a lot of really different translations that have the same effect.

Jaz: Well, mine says, "his heart froze, for he could not believe them," in the second part, but the "his heart froze" is just so fascinating to me that I wanted to double-check it. Anyway —

Lulav: Yeah. Thanks

Jaz: They convince him and then they all go on their way, they come to Beersheba, and G-d comes in a vision and G-d says, "Yaakov, Yaakov!" and he says, "Hineini, here I am!" and then G-d says, "I am the Gd of your father, do not be afraid. Go down to Egypt, you will be a great people, and I will bring you back." And so then they all move,

Lulav: Yeah. So, does the ambivalent use of Yisrael's names tell us anything about how they are differentiated, or is it how I have a couple single friends that have a proliferation of names and you just play Calvinball with it?

Jaz: Hmm. That's a good question. It does offer a few different possibilities. We've all known — sorry, many of us have known people who have just changed their names lots

of times and also have a point where they're like, "Yeah, you can call me any of those three names —

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: "and they all either are me or have been me at some point and they're not like, a wrong name to use for me."

Lulav: Yeah, exactly.

Jaz: But it sounded like your question implied there might be two people here, right two names for two different —?

Lulav: Well, I think that's counter-indicated, because in 46:2, G-d spoke to Yisrael in visions of the night, and said, "Yaakov, Yaakov!"

Jaz: Right. Fascinating.

Lulav: So it's interchangeable there. and it doesn't seem like the different uses for the different names, the way that we've been trying to puzzle out this entire time. *(laughs)*

Jaz: Yeah. So I have a practical theory and then a more inter-textual theory.

Lulav: Okay.

Jaz: My practical theory are because some of these texts are written by different people and then they have to reconcile them.

Lulav: *(chuckles)* What's your Watsonian?

Jaz: *(chuckles)* My Watsonian theory is that the text wishes to distinguish between being addressed as the person who is the precursor to a whole tribe of people and being addressed as an individual.

Lulav: Okay.

Jaz: That G-d speaks to him in that vision, saying that vision is going to be about that whole thing, but first, when he talks to him, he just calls his individual name, not his name as the representative of the people, even though that's what the whole thing is going to be about.

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: But just his individual name. And when we have it earlier, we have this thing about "Israel's sons set about doing this," which is when they're preparing to go all down, but when they talk to Joseph, they say, "and Jacob their father."

Lulav: Mm hmm.

Jaz: Because that's a more personal thing.

Lulav: Huh. Yeah, that makes sense, thank you. Then what happens, then what happens?

Jaz: (*chuckles*) Then we get a long long section of here are the names of Jacob's sons who came to Egypt and we get children and grandchild and they're all divided by who specifically is the kid of who, and Zebulun's children, who are Sarah and — you know.

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: Yeah. There's so many of them.

Lulav: There are 72 of them, which has some really nice prime factors to it.

Jaz: Uh huh. Wait, there's 72?

Lulav: Yeah. The children of Yosef, who were born to him in Egypt, were two, and all the persons of the house of Yaakov who came into Egypt were 70, right? Because there — are the wives not —? also the children —?

Jaz: The math here is very unclear to me.

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: If there are 72, that's cool because it's twice 36, which means it's quadruple chai.

Lulav: Oh, okay! And also the prime factors are three 2s and two 3s.

Jaz: That's fun. I was curious if you did the math, because I didn't do the math, but there is a reference to, at one point, a daughter.

Lulav: Oh yeah.

Jaz: And there is a reference at a couple points — like, there's a line that says, "his sons and daughters were 33 persons in all, male and female" but almost all of the named people we get are men.

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: So when we say 70, do you think that this is supposed to imply “we counted all of the people and just most of them were men,” or “we just didn't count most of the women, that they're not included in this number”?

Lulav: I think the textual implication is that they just have a lot of men, because having boy children is in many cultures seen as much more important than having girl children.

Jaz: Mm hmm.

Lulav: And I think the fact that they do mention Sarah, daughter of Asher, and Dinah and stuff like that means that they are including the women and there just aren't a lot of them. But it is also possible that they just don't care about most women. *(laughs)*

Jaz: Uh huh. Sorry for taking over your question-asking for a minute. I just —

Lulav: You're fine. We're all communists here. What?

Jaz: *(laughs)* So, and then, Judah goes ahead, meets his father, and when Israel meets Joseph, he says, “now that I've seen your face, you're still alive, I can die at last.” There's this implication of “now I can die happy because I have met my favorite again.”

Lulav: This dramatic family.

26:01

Jaz: So dramatic! So then Joseph tells them where they should live and where's a good place for them to herd, and tells them what to say to the Pharaoh, who will reinforce that decision. And so, then he goes in and talks to Pharaoh, and picks out which of his brothers he thinks are most presentable *(Lulav giggles)* and presents them to the Pharaoh and then they answer as Joseph has told them to, which is based on this piece of knowledge that Egyptians find shepherds abhorrent.

Lulav: Okay, so about that — the note in the NRSV says “there is no non-Biblical evidence for this assertion”. *(jaz laughs)* And also, the translation has them using the word “shepherd” when talking to Pharaoh and Pharaoh just doesn't blink.

Jaz: Well — *(laughs)*

Lulav: So like, why? Why is that there?

Jaz: Well, *(laughs, then continues through laughter)* in this explanation, I think it's supposed to imply, you're supposed to tell him you're shepherds because they don't like

shepherds and so he'll put you in this specific area where I think you should live because that's where they send the shepherds, who they don't like

Lulav: Oh, okay, gotcha.

Jaz: Um...that was my reading of it, and also the notes in my commentary do touch on that and sort of reinforce that. They say that it is a puzzling comment (*both laugh*). Yeah, it super is, and it says it's possibly designed to explain why Goshen - somewhat isolated from the seat of power in the capital - was a desirable place for newcomers. And it also notes, kind of embarrassedly, that "Egyptian sources do not support the statement of abhorrence." (*laughs*)

Lulav: (*laughs*) It's the nicer, more academic way of saying "there's literally no evidence for this." (*laughs*)

Jaz: Yeah, yeah. It's super funny.

Lulav: So what happens now that there's no food in all the land, for the famine was very severe?

Jaz: Wait, there is one more thing before we get to "there is no food."

Lulav: Oh, okay.

Jaz: Which is that they settle and their dad, as Yaakov, goes to meet the Pharaoh. Joseph brings him before Pharaoh and Pharaoh has one thing to say to him, which is "how many years have you lived," how old are you, and Yaakov says, "the span of the years of my lifetime have been 130, few and miserable have been the days of the years of my life," and then is like, "my father and grandfather lived longer". And then he blesses Pharaoh and then he leaves! And like, settles with the rest of his children. And Joseph keeps providing food for all of them. That is the thing that happens before there's no food in the land. `

Lulav: Yeah! So, my mental image of this was just, like, Yaakov leads in a guy who looks like he's literally dead and Pharaoh's just like, "Oh, G-d, how old are you?!" (*jaz laughs*) and then he's like, "*(old coot voice)* A hundred and thirty-seven. I didn't party nearly as much as my ancestors. Bless you!" and then leaves.

Jaz: That's so funny, I like your version. My interior version had been, Joseph is like, "you have to meet my dad", and he brings in his father and the Pharaoh's, like, trying to make pleasant small talk and just most of that pleasant small talk isn't recorded, and then he says something along the lines of "how old are you?" and then suddenly the pleasant small talk stops and then Jacob is like "*(somber voice)* I have lived this many

years, and they have all been terrible." (*both laugh*) and then he's like, "May your life be better," and then exits. Like!

Lulav: (*cracking up*) That's so good! And also, that's a relatable thing because anytime anybody asks me, "how are you today?" I answer honestly? And so sometimes it's like, "Oh, I'm doing pretty well, how are you?" and sometimes it's like, "oh, I scratched both my knees and... pretty depressed actually; haven't really gone outside except for right now."

Jaz: Uh huh.

Lulav: So just like, the oversharing is very relatable.

Jaz: Yeah, and then sometimes you're like, "well that's the end of the conversation." Especially when you say that to like, a normie and they're like, (*Lulav laughs*) "Well I don't know what to do with that anymore."

(*Jaz laughs*)

Lulav: Yeah, yeah; good phrasing.

Jaz: Yeah.

Lulav: So yeah, then what happens?

30:00

Jaz: So then, Joseph is like, "Okay, we're going to move you out of the city" and they go settle in Goshen, and then there's no food, both in Egypt and in Canaan, so then people are buying food from the storehouses - led by Joseph, kind of - and they buy it with silver, and when people don't have any more silver, the Egyptians come and said, "okay but, we still need to eat," and Joseph's like, "well, I'll sell it to you for other things," and so they bring all of their livestock and they sell their horses and their sheep and their cattle and their donkeys and, for a year, that's how they have more food.

And then that year ends, and they said, "okay we still need to eat and we gave you all our silver and all our livestock, but we're still going to die and we don't want to die," so they say "buy us and our soil, and distribute seed, and so he, yeah, he buys all of the land in Egypt for Pharaoh because the other ppl feel like they need to sell it and it says "he made serfs of the people from one end of the Egyptian border to the other". But he doesn't buy it from the priests, because the priests, it says, have an allotment from Pharaoh, and they ate their allotted portion, so they didn't have to sell everything because they were just given food by the government. And then Joseph says to the people, "now that I've bought you and your land, here's your food! Here's seeds! And, uh, you can continue to grow food on that land, but you have to give us some of it."

Lulav: Specifically one-fifth of it.

Jaz: “The other four-fifths,” it says, “will be for seeding the land and will be for food for you and your household and your little ones.” (*Lulav chuckles*) and they say, “well, thanks for letting us live”, and they word it here as “You have given us life! May we find favor in my lord's sight and be serfs to Pharaoh!” and, uh...yeah, and that happens to everybody except the priests and I think except his family, who settle in the land and, it says, “were fruitful and multiplied greatly”.

31:55

Lulav: Yeah. So, I'm gonna do a Perchik Corner,

Jaz: Please.

Lulav: And then I want to hear your take on this whole thing.

Jaz: Yeah. (*sigh*)

Lulav: The system is constructed to extract surplus value from the laborers, for despite that there is enough food for all of them, they're forced to accept the future extraction of wealth in exchange for not starving. We are told multiple times that the bourgeoisie, however, rest on their laurels due to the cushy agreements they have struck.

Jaz: Yeah!

Lulav: So do you have feelings about that? Like, agreement, disagreement?

Jaz: I have lots of feelings about it. (*Lulav chuckles*) Um, I'm not in principle opposed to the idea that land is collectively held.

Lulav: Right.

Jaz: And that individual people do work it and they do, like, get fed.

Lulav: Yeah, which is nice.

Jaz: Yeah, which is nice. But I also think that the government should just feed them. They can afford to feed them. That's why they got all of the storehouses up years in advance. That's what it's for. They don't need to make the people into —

Lulav: Indentured servants?

Jaz: Yeah. To do so. And if you're talking abolition of private property, that's supposed to mean it's held in collective, not it's held by a ruler.

Lulav: Right?!

Jaz: That this isn't abolition of private property, it's just more centralized control and handing more power over to one person.

Lulav: Yeah, and it's "you will give one fifth to Pharaoh," like, regardless of circumstances?

Jaz: Right.

Lulav: And we don't know if that means he's gonna rebuild the grain stores after the famine, or if it means —

Jaz: He's gonna have lavish parties.

Lulav: Right, exactly.

Jaz: And there is knowledge that this could adversely affect people, because it specifically says, "and the other four-fifths you'll use for planting and for eating, including for your children," like, there is no other amount of social safety net.

Lulav: Yeah, no provision for what if that four-fifths isn't enough.

Jaz: Right. And there isn't included in here a provision about what if you did not have land to sell. Did you — the Egyptians — just starve? You know?

Lulav: Mm hmm.

Jaz: What if, y'know, the first year, you gave all your silver but you did not have lots of animals to sell the second year?

Lulav: *(sympathetically)* Yeah.

Jaz: And also the thing that it makes me think of, actually, because we know that later on, the Jewish people become slaves, which is presumably lower than serfs in this equation, is it makes me think about two different historic things.

Lulav: Mm hmm

Jaz: One is the ways in which Jewish people have been used as middlemen throughout lots of history to direct righteous rage not against the ruling class who is truly exploiting

them, but against the Jewish people who were kind of in the middle and a much easier target. Because, y'know, Pharaoh is the one exploiting them, but Joseph's relatives are doing okay, because he's doing the bidding of the Pharaoh, and so there is a much easier sense of "we can be furious at these people."

Lulav: Mm hmm.

Jaz: And also reminds me of the way in which, in the US, there was working-class solidarity across racial lines until, like, working class white people were offered sort of a racial bribe of, "if you look down on black people then, even though your circumstances won't improve, you will not be the worst off anymore."

Lulav: Yeah. (*sarcastically*) Thanks, white supremacy.

Jaz: Right, so, those were the things that it reminds me of. Okay!

35:11

Lulav: Jaz, can you take us — wait, no. Do we have questions?

Jaz: Yeah... we don't have discussion questions, but it is time for Rating G-d's Writing, (*Lulav gasps*) the segment in which we rate the parsha on two different scales that we come up with in the moment!

Lulav: I forget this every time —

Jaz: Uh huh!

Lulav: but it's one of my favorite parts.

Jaz: Uh huh. Lulav, out of 70 extended relatives who are mostly inexplicably men, (*Lulav laughs*) what rating would you give this parsha?

Lulav: Ugh, I can't believe you're making me rate on a scale of mostly men. This is lesbian erasure. (*both laugh*)

Jaz: It's the Bible's fault, don't @ me, like.

Lulav: Yeah. So, I think I'm gonna give this 58 people?

Jaz: Hm, okay.

Lulav: Including Serah and Dinah and —

Jaz: Including all of the women.

Lulav: — all of the- yeah. (*Both laugh*) Cuz like, it's good. It's got a good structure, including a last-time-on bit in the beginning there, and everything works out for people?

Jaz: Mmmm.

Lulav: Other than the, like, centralization of land-holding in the hands of the Pharaoh.

Jaz: Right. Get it out of the hands of the ruling class and give it back to the people.

Lulav: Yeah. There wasn't as much, like, interesting stuff going on, which is why it's 58 instead of, like, higher?

Jaz: Mmm.

Lulav: But it was well constructed. This is just a solid Bible story. Jaz, out of 32 courtiers who can definitely hear you crying, oh my G-d why are you crying so loudly, how many eavesdropping courtiers would you rate this parsha?

Jaz: Hmm. I think I'd give it like 27.

Lulav: Okay.

Jaz: I also appreciated the “this time on.” I appreciated the family coming together and reconciliation,

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: And this early model for teshuvah, of like, you know that people have really done better when they're presented with a very similar situation and they choose the better path?

Lulav: Mm hmm.

Jaz: *And* they want to make it up to you? I am really troubled mostly by this bit at the end of class exploitation that's happening of desperate people and I cannot tell whether the narrative condemns those actions or not, or thinks that they're just, like, prudent and great? And I actually kind of wish I'd done some reading on what the commentaries say about that?

Lulav: Yeah. My feelings on this are that throughout the Avraham's-family stories of Bereshit, we've been focusing on people who are, at least at some point in their life,

wealthy landowners who control dozens or hundreds of men and just have a whole bunch of livestock?

Jaz: Mm hmm.

Lulav: And so I think this is viewed as a neutral-to-positive thing, because that's the point of view we're seeing this from, is the bourgeoisie,

Jaz: Mmmmmm.

Lulav: And *(mocking voice)* small business owners.

Jaz: That's hard. Yeah.

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: You know. We're not about it.

Lulav: So we have 58 extended family members and 27 eavesdropping courtiers.

Jaz: Yup. Yes.

Lulav: Okay! Jaz, 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. Go buy their album, they're great. Our sound production for this episode, I think, is still done by my lovely co-host, Lulav Arnow.

Lulav: *(snaps fingers as though she is giving you finger guns)* Catch you in the bathroom!

Jaz: *(laughs)* Um, but we are bringing on a new person to our team, which is very exciting,

Lulav: Yeah!

Jaz: And Ezra is going to do great stuff! So, another plug for, please help us pay everybody who we have onboard, and support us on Patreon. Again, that is patreon.com/kosherqueers. Thank you. *(Lulav chuckles)* Anyway, 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: gender compersion.

Lulav: This week's pronouns are: fe and fen.