

28 — Acharei-Mot Kedoshim: Yes, THAT Line in Leviticus

Lulav: Hi Jaz.

Jaz: Hi Lulav. What cool or queer or Jewish things have you been up to this week?

Lulav: Well, a couple of days ago I was wandering bamidbar with my best friend, which is to say we moved Theo into their new apartment.

Jaz: Congratulations.

Lulav: Yeah, it was a whole day of driving in a big circle around Minneapolis picking up their cat and getting a litter box and stuff while also making extremely certain not to breathe on anything. But yeah, they seemed to have a great household and they're kind of vaguely on the way to shul for me so I might be able to hang out with them.

Jaz: That's lovely. Sometime in the distant future probably.

Lulav: Oh, G-d yes. *(laughs)* We don't currently have services in shul.

Jaz: Yeah, yeah.

Lulav: It was just really nice. It was really good having them here for a week and I do miss them.

Jaz: Yeah.

Lulav: What's up in your life, Jaz? Anything cool, queer and Jewish?

Jaz: Well, I feel like lots of my life is constantly queer and Jewish.

Lulav: Oh yes.

Jaz: *(laughs)* let's see, since I think since we last recorded, I got to play an excellent RPG called, uh —

Lulav: Oh!

Jaz: Called Gay Hot... Bro Dragons? — I don't remember how titles work.

Lulav: Nope! Hot Gay Bro Dragons!

Jaz: Thank you, alright. *(laughs)*

Lulav: Can I get a clean take on that?

Jaz: No! Ugh. *(laughs)*

Lulav: Good. I was very confused because I was like you don't normally play RPGs, who did you do that with? *(Jaz laughs)* And —

Jaz: Yeah, so that was delightful.

Lulav: With me. They played with me.

Jaz: Yes, we played — this is why Lulav knows the name of it and I don't.

Lulav: This is the longest week ever. *(laughs)*

Jaz: Such a long week, such a long week. Yeah. I can't believe that everything is happening in the same week which is why my mind is dazed. I guess the other thing I did was I got minorly starstruck because I was in a Jewish study group with Ezra Furman and I stumbled all over myself as I was trying to talk intelligently about text and also, not be like, you are a very cool singer.

Lulav: Okay, going to show my whole butt here, who's Ezra Furman?

Jaz: *(laughs)* They are a trans singer who did the album "Transangelic Exodus," which I enjoy as an album. I'll link to it.

Lulav: They sound really familiar.

Jaz: Yeah... there was some cool write-up probably recently about her but is also a neat person who has gone to queer Talmud camps and was at this queer Talmud study thing and I was trying to be like, you are a reasonable person who is also studying, but I was like, this is another person whose music I like.

Lulav: That's really cool. I'm happy for you.

Jaz: Thank you.

Lulav: So the one last thing I do want to mention —

Jaz: Yeah?

Lulav: Is that I have slept like six hours in three days so, get ready for that wild ride.

Jaz: Yeah... I do want to give as a preface for this episode that this is a real —

Lulav: Heavy.

Jaz: Heavy episode — I mean, we will still make jokes. It'll still be a fun time. *(Lulav laughs)* Originally we had planned to have a guest on and be extra extra prepared for it and instead we were like maybe a normal amount of prepared and it's just us *(Lulav laughs)* but my therapist says we have to give ourselves more leeway because everyone is distracted and has trouble focusing and this is a normal part of being in a global crisis so please enjoy the episode anyway.

[Brivele intro music]

Lulav: And 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 going to talk about Acharei-Mot K'doshim, another double parsha.

Jaz: Yeah, Lulav, are you ready to do a summary of this parsha?

Lulav: Sure am. Can I get sixty seconds?

Jaz: Yeah, ready, set, go.

Lulav: Aharon is in the doghouse after the whole calf thing and his sons losing Simon Says. He is charged with the first Yom Kippur. G-d says you gotta do sacrifices in the mishkan now. People aren't to be trusted not to worship other gods. Also, in case you weren't listening don't eat blood. Incest is bad with enough examples that if you have to ask if it counts, it probably does. Also, period stripping and pegging are on the same level as baby sacrifice and bestiality, apparently. Every other nation sucks because they do these things, supposedly. We have a refresher and extension course on a couple of relational laws from a previous parsha. And then the parsha wraps up with demanding death for several of the things G-d just covered. And in case you didn't catch the three times this was said, Adonai hates wizards. How'd I do?

Jaz: Alright and with six seconds to spare.

Lulav: Oh okay, alright.

Jaz: Nice job.

Lulav: I kind of skipped over what all goes into the mishkan-era Yom Kippur.

Jaz: That's alright.

Lulav: So do you mind if I walk you through it line by line?

Jaz: Please do.

Lulav: Okay so like I said it starts off with G-d talking to Moshe who is supposed to tell Aaron not to come just anytime into the sanctuary because if he does, he'll die. And what he has to do is get together a bull and a ram and put on his fancy holy stuff and bathe — don't forget to bathe — and we've been wondering what Urim and Thummim are for.

Jaz: Uh huh.

Lulav: Those things in the pouch in the high priest's neck — and we find out here one of the uses because Aharon is supposed to cast lots on two goats. So he designates either Urim or Thumim for Adonai and the other one for Azazel.

Jaz: Yeah.

Lulav: And casts those lots in front of the goats and offers the one for the Tetragrammaton as a sin offering and offers the one for Azazel as a scapegoat.

Jaz: Yes. Okay. A few questions. First, this parsha is named Acharei Mot for "after death."

Lulav: Rough!

Jaz: Yeah so how do you feel that relates to the themes of the parsha as a whole and then how do you feel about it?

(7:22)

Lulav: Well, we're coming off of some death and uh, seem like there's going to be a lot more death. Hashem is really angry in this chapter and I don't know, in the words of my good friend Mona, hey this sucks? *(laughs)*

Jaz: It's a little rough.

Lulav: It sure is that. So yeah, that's the connections that I'm drawing. This is very clearly a punishment for wrong action, not only specifically the not-listening that Aharon's sons did but

also just like, all of the transgressions of the covenant that the people have done already. Do you have particular insights on this Jaz?

Jaz: No, I think that it is just an interesting framing that there is going to be further death happening and that to count on it as after death suggests that we have moved into a different type of category than whatever category we were in previously.

Lulav: Okay.

(8:21)

Jaz: But I don't know exactly what that means in practical terms, just that maybe there's a way to think about these things as belonging to slightly different categories. I guess we'll come back to that. There's repetition in here of stuff that's been said earlier, so I'm interested in thinking about recontextualizing it.

Lulav: So, are you saying, when we're talking about categories, that this is after death in the sense that death is not a part of it, or that death super is a part of it?

Jaz: It super is a part of it.

Lulav: Okay, (*laughs*) cool. I mean, not cool. Hey this sucks. (*laughs*)

Jaz: I don't know, if you liked the other one more, you could go with the version of like, we've already had the death portion of it and then this is trying to re-tool that. Okay, but the other bit is, I just have a lot of question marks and it says "Azazel?????" What is up with Azazel?

Lulav: Yeah, so the -el ending means that this is, like, a god name?

Jaz: Mmhmm.

Lulav: And, very sorry — I haven't gotten a JPS from Kheshed yet. (*Jaz laughs*) The NRSV says that this is an angry or fierce god. Do you have any linguistic talking about it in your texts?

Jaz: I do, yeah. So, first we have a spelling of it. It's ayin, zayin, aleph, zayin, lamed. And there is — sort of unsurprisingly — a long explication of all of the things that happen in Acharei Mot in the Talmud in Yoma, and Yoma is the tractate — or “masechet” in Hebrew — that deals with all things related to Yom Kippur. And because this is where we introduce Yom Kippur, we have stuff about Azazel.

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: So there's stuff here — that maybe the word Azazel indicates that the cliff that the goat is pushed from should be hard and rough? (*Lulav laughs*) Which is very funny, but there's also maybe a reference to the hardest mountain...

Lulav: So where does the mountain part come from?

Jaz: I think it's actually more about *roughness* here, or hardness, which is what the word “az” means.

Lulav: Okay. So yeah, the interpretation that I had here attempts to maintain our monotheism (*chuckles*), and I'm conceiving of these as two names for G-d. One is the Being G-d, the G-d of plenty, the very personal G-d, and the other is the rough aspect of G-d.

Jaz: Mmm.

Lulav: The one where you don't do a bunch of complicated stuff, because the one that is offered to the Tetragrammaton is a sin offering, so you're purifying the sanctuary by burning up this goat. And that's in keeping with how we've had the Tetragrammaton used multiple times when talking about mishkan practice. So in contrast, Azazel... what you're supposed to do with that is place all of the wrongdoings of the community on that goat and then just send it off into the wilderness. You don't kill it, you just push it away. And so I think that's just two different commanded ways of sacrificing to G-d, through two names of G-d.

Jaz: Mmm!

Lulav: What is your favorite interpretation here?

Jaz: When I think about this idea of maybe it related to hardness or things that are strong or vehement or intense, I like connecting it to that idea, and I like the idea that the things that need to be sent away — we're not killing them, that we're just sending them away. And that we have an understanding that some things are too rough to be able to thrive in the setting of the community, and so things that we don't have a good way of resolving, like conflicts or sins or whatever, maybe we're just sending them away.

Lulav: Yeah. And I think you talking through that made a connection for me, which is: later in the chapter we are told about how the land has thrown up its inhabitants (*Jaz hums in acknowledgment*) because of their iniquities, and so maybe this is a metaphor for this, where we are putting all those iniquities on a single goat and just pushing it out into the wilderness.

Jaz: Mmm!

Lulav: Because this is what would happen to the people if we didn't keep the covenant. We would just be on our own.

Jaz: Mmmm.

Lulav: That's: rough.

Jaz: Yeah! (*both laugh*) Okay.

Lulav: Yeah, so it's the sacrificial instructions for that sin offering of the bowl and the sin offering of the goat, and there's a lot about the uncleanness of the people of Yisrael and the atonement that is being done for that. Do you have anything in 15 through 19?

Jaz: Yeah. I mostly have a question about Yom Kippur for you, and a quick story.

Lulav: Okay.

Jaz: They do all of this talking about how Aharon is atoning for the wrongdoings of all of the people, and so my first question would be, how does he know it? (*Lulav chuckles*) and my second, related thing is, I once went to a Yom Kippur service where the rabbi had ahead of time asked people to send in sins that they would read out loud.

Lulav: Okay. I love that. What was that thing with the postcards that the weird dude ran? Like, PostSecret?

Jaz: Oh, I don't remember.

Lulav: This was like, 2010. 9? 10. It was a while ago.

Jaz: Okay. Tell us about it?

Lulav: It was a thing where people would send in postcards about secrets. Okay, mostly this was a source of entertainment because it was like, “ooh~ all of these *secrets!*” but I think if people are calm and not bragging about the transgressive things that they have done, this is a great idea and a fun thing to do as a community.

Jaz: It's cool. In practice, there was like two parts to it, and the second part in particular made me grumpy, and the reason it made me grumpy is because Yom Kippur has these prayers where you communally say, “we have done all of these bad things,” and they instead replaced it with these things that people had sent in anonymously —

Lulav: Hmm.

Jaz: And they had a family write all of their things together and then go up and say their things together.

Lulav: Hmm.

Jaz: And I think the family had volunteered to do this, but it was like, including a parent and their kids. And I didn't enjoy it, and also I didn't enjoy it because they were really small things, the sort of things a family might be willing to confess in public in front of their whole community?

Lulav: “I'm sorry I didn't clean up my Legos,” and stuff like that?

Jaz: Yes. And I was like, okay but the original one is about really bad things that maybe somebody in a community has done, and that... y'know, we're holding lying and cheating and violating, and maybe we should go harder on that.

(15:20)

Lulav: (*laughs*) Yeah. And I don't like the idea of centering a specific family from the community in the practice. It's supposed to be a whole community thing that... people whose job it is to handle it for you steward that process?

Jaz: Mmmmm.

Lulav: Normally I'm iffy on hierarchies — and priesthood specifically — but handling community atonement ceremonies is very touchy work.

Jaz: Yeah. Anyway, my question, I guess, to get to is two-fold: one, how do you feel about Yom Kippur as a holiday — and maybe we can read more about the specifics of it that are laid out here — and two, if you have to guess people's wrongdoings (*Lulav laughs*) do you think it's better to assume that they've done more bad than maybe is true or less bad than maybe is true?

Lulav: That's a very good question. Two questions: I have done Yom Kippur once and probably two tashlich ceremonies in years prior. I still actually have a stone from one of the JPride tashlich ceremonies, where it was like... I think it was cast a stone into the water? for all the wrongdoings that you have done —

Jaz: Mhm.

Lulav: And if you would like, take a stone into the new year to remember things.

Jaz: Mmmm!

Lulav: And so that's just in my kitchen and has been for like, two, three years and it's nice to sometimes look at it and be like, oh yeah, I remember exactly where I was and the impactfulness of that ceremony. This year, this last Yom Kippur was the first time that I had done Yom Kippur.

Jaz: Wow.

Lulav: Yeah, there was a lot? Everybody was wearing white, except for me because I don't own white clothing (*laughs*). I'm too goth for that.

Jaz: Well, it is a goth thing, to be fair. (*Lulav laughs*) You're wearing white because you get buried in white.

Lulav: Ooh. Okay! Is that why?

Jaz: Yes!

Lulav: That's amazing. (*Jaz laughs*)

Jaz: It's like practicing for your death.

Lulav: Oh right, that whole thing about like... writing people into the Book of Life and the Book of Death?

Jaz: Yes!

Lulav: Is that Yom Kippur?

Jaz: Yes!

Lulav: Boy howdy. But yeah, we were in the auditorium of a Catholic church, because we didn't have enough space in our shul for all the people who showed up.

Jaz: Uh huh.

Lulav: One of the nice Catholic churches. I think we talked about St. Joan of Arc back in like, episode 0?

Jaz: All I remember is there was a moment where I was like, maybe there's nice Catholic churches on the podcast and one of my friends texted me after she listened to it and was like, Jaz, your podcast is great but I have to correct you — there are no nice Catholic churches.

(18:11)

Lulav: I also did say that on air. (*both laugh*) Okay, so the thing about the ceremony was there were so many people pressed together — I'm getting COVID sweats just thinking about it

(*laughs while saying "um"*) — but like, it was a really worshipful environment? Lots of people knew what they were doing. I didn't, but there were enough people around me who knew what they were doing such that I could follow along and it was a good holiday.

Jaz: (*contentedly*) Hmm.

Lulav: Generally speaking, the whole denial thing is rough. Partly because I don't take great care of myself when I'm not denying myself anything, which means that I tend to skip fasting as part of practice.

Jaz: Sure.

Lulav: Yeah, but I do like the general idea of getting together as a community and, now that you're in the new year, being like, "hey, time to be a better person."

Jaz: Yeah.

Lulav: And... What was your second question again?

Jaz: Second question was about, is it better to assume they've done more bad or better to assume they've done less bad?

Lulav: I think it depends on how you're sharing it.

Jaz: Hmmm.

Lulav: Because if this is a public thing of, like, "these are the bad things that we have done in the year," then I think assuming more bad is a good way to go, because one scenario is you say a bunch of bad things but nobody knows that it doesn't apply to anybody. Another scenario is, people have done even worse things that are related. So at the very least, you're not stopping at not picking up Legos.

Jaz: Right.

Lulav: And another thing that might happen is it really strikes a chord with a bunch of people.

Jaz: Right.

Lulav: Yeah, I think over-assuming when it is something that is communally shared is a good idea.

Jaz: Mmmm!

Lulav: But in terms of Aharon in a tent by himself confessing all of the transgressions, I think you can just keep it to what you know and make a couple blanket statements about "for this and all other things."

Jaz: (*snorts*) Yeah.

Lulav: I also don't put a lot of stock in the metaphysical importance of confession (*Jaz laughs*) absent a person affected.

Jaz: Fair enough.

Lulav: So yeah. Do you have an opinion on the over-assume/under-assume thing?

Jaz: I mean, I think that there's sort of two aspects to it, which is if you look at a broad-spread community and you're like, I don't know who in this community, but somebody has had dishonest business practices probably, so we're going to hold that as a community. I feel like that's a good thing to do? And then you get to say to the community, "look, I don't know who it is, probably somebody has, we have communal responsibility for that because it shouldn't happen in our community."

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: And I think that there's value to overstating it, but I also think about it a little bit as, it's not just shared but it's also something that's coming from the leader, and when I am teaching at the front of the classroom, I don't want to overstate the wrongness of things my students have been doing. I actually want to focus on, most of the time, "I think you've been doing really positive things and I want to encourage you to do more positive things."

Lulav: Yeah! And I love that, especially with 8-year-olds. (*both laugh*)

Jaz: I think it applies to adults too, but I also think in general. It applies to 8-year-olds partially because they're young and still forming their sense of self, but also because they're really vulnerable and, by virtue of being an adult, I'm a person with authority — and I think that you can extrapolate that to other situations where people have authority.

Lulav: Yeah. And I think a crucial thing here is that you cannot, as the high priest — or in modern Yom Kippur celebrations, the rabbi — hold yourself as apart from the community.

Jaz: Mmm.

Lulav: When you're talking about “these are evils that we have done to each other,” that includes you!

Jaz: Right, yeah. Don't have heroes, et cetera.

Lulav: So yeah. Talking up the positives as much as possible and not pretending that you're perfect are some of the highlights of that part.

Jaz: I think so.

Lulav: Anything else on Yom Kippur?

Jaz: No, let's go to the next bit.

(22:18)

Lulav: So, Hashem says to Moshe to say to Aharon — and everyone — that if anyone slaughters an ox or a lamb or a goat in the camp or outside the camp and doesn't bring it to the mishkan as an offering, they're guilty of bloodshed. The way that I read this is specifically slaughtering for sacrifice? Is that how you read it?

Jaz: Well, it's deeply confusing in the sense that we have butchers. (*Lulav laughs*) So I can't read it as any other way — like, unless you decided to read it as, we all gotta be vegetarian—

Lulav: Right.

Jaz: —except for under very specific circumstances, the like, "there shall be bloodguilt" (*Lulav chuckles nervously*) and "that person shall be cut off" is a very strong statement to me.

Lulav: Yeah. Congrats on being extremely territorial about your sacrifices, priests-who-were-writing-this.

Jaz: (*laughs*) Yeah.

Lulav: So yeah. I think that either this is a wildly restrictive commandment about bringing sacrifice animals: the ox, lamb, or goat... specifically not slaughtering it for yourself, but offering that sacrifice to the Temple; or we just interpret it as "don't sacrifice unless you're at the temple."

Jaz: I'm very sympathetic— I will say, this is not my reading of it, but I'm very sympathetic to someone who would look at the text and be like, "this is a really good argument for vegetarianism." (*Lulav laughs*) But what I will say instead is that it seems to me, instead, an argument for looking at it and being like, "hey, the plain meaning of the text, the one that says if you kill an animal you shall be cut off from the community, maybe we gotta be more complicated than reading the plain meaning of the text, because that one is obviously incorrect." (*Lulav chuckles*)

Lulav: Also I think there are several better arguments, even halachically, for vegetarianism.

Jaz: Yeah, I think that's probably true too.

Lulav: But yes. Good. Thank you for that. So basically you're not allowed to slaughter animals for sacrifice unless you offer them up to the mishkan and the priests and you also just shouldn't, generally, be sacrificing or burning things up — whether you are one of the people or one of the goyim who reside among us.

Jaz: Mhmm.

Lulav: And the way that I talked about this in the short summary was that the people can't be trusted to make their own sacrifices, and so they have to be monitored.

Jaz: Hm!

Lulav: There is also a restatement of the don't eat blood and the same cutting people off from people. The explanation that Hashem gives here is that blood is the vital essence of life?

Jaz: Yeah! Can I read this?

Lulav: Yeah, please.

Jaz: The first time, it's "ki nefesh habashar b'dam hi," (כִּי-נֶפֶשׁ כָּל-בָּשָׂר דָּמָהּ בַּדָּם הִיא) and the second time is "ki nefesh kol bashar damo b'nafsho hu," (כִּי נֶפֶשׁ כָּל-בָּשָׂר דָּמָהּ הִוא) and the main difference for me in the restatement is the addition of kol — of "all".

Lulav: Yeah!

(25:14)

Jaz: And this idea that the soul— "ki", because, "nefesh", soul, "habashar", the flesh, "b'dam", is in the blood. And it's a little bit of a beautiful thing to me in particular. I have a relative who recently got a blood transfusion and the blood transfusion did wonders in terms of energy and being able to go about his life and stuff.

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: I don't know, I think there's sort of a lovely thing here about, like, blood is so, so important to life.

Lulav: Yeah, but the thing that follows from that is because it is so important to life, that is how you make atonement for your lives on the altar. So that's why we don't eat blood.

Jaz: Unless you're a vampire, in which case it's okay.

Lulav: Yes. Well, only if you're an obligate blood eater. I feel like if you *can* survive on other things, it's iffy?

Jaz: That's not what a vampire is.

Lulav: That's not what a vampire is, okay. Okay so that's all that. Are you good with this part?

Jaz: I'm good with this part. Yeah, yeah.

Lulav: (*laughs*) So then we get a whole speech about "Don't do things like you did in Egypt; don't do things like they do in Canaan. Because that is why I have punished these various lands and they have thrown up their inhabitants." So the specific things that you are supposed to do in this section are not approaching anyone near-of-kin to uncover nakedness and...I don't want to dwell on this section for personal reasons, but yeah, it's a lot of different restatements of this, including people who are not related to you directly. If it's, like, infringing on your family connections, that counts as incest and you shouldn't do it. And moreover it's "uncovering nakedness", not necessarily explicit sexual relations.

Jaz: Yes. I mean I do think that there is, in general, *usually* an extrapolation from that, though it is true that when we see "uncover nakedness" in the story of Noach, that it's not as straightforward about what it might mean there.

Lulav: Yeah. Also, I say that it's not even as far as having sexual relations, because in 18:20 it says, "You shall not have sexual relations with your kinsman's wife and defile yourself with her."

Jaz: Mm.

Lulav: So I feel like the explicit statement there means that everything else is not euphemism but is literally, like...

Jaz: You have stricter rules there.

Lulav: Yeah. Is there anything else that you wanted to talk about here?

Jaz: Not in the part about your family, no.

Lulav: (*snorts*) Okay. So...

(*A long pause*)

Jaz: Are we just stalling, like, what's happening? (*laughs*)

Lulav: No; sorry, I just realized what is up. So 18:19 is where you do not approach a woman to uncover her nakedness when she is in her menstrual uncleanness, and then we talk about the “don’t have sex with your kinsman’s wife”, and then, (*Jaz chuckles*) “don’t murder babies as sacrifice to profane gods”?

Jaz: Uh-huh! (*laughs*)

Lulav: And then, “do not lie with a man as with a woman, it is an abomination”.

Jaz: Okay.

Lulav: And then, that one is on the same level as “You shall not have sexual relations with any *animal*.” So... yeah... let’s put that tiger on the table and yell at it.

Jaz: (*laughs*) Okay.

Lulav: I think the most charitable interpretation that we have here is that you are commanded not to do sex the same way with men as you would with women. That’s the *most* charitable interpretation I can draw.

Jaz: Okay! I have heard over the years so many interpretations of this particular verse.

Lulav: Hey remember when every magazine cover for about two years straight had something about (*chuckles*) Bible verses?

Jaz: Well...

Lulav: I may be overstating this, but it certainly felt like every single month or week or whatever it was.

Jaz: People certainly felt free to quote this all of the time.

Lulav: Boy howdy.

Jaz: Okay I just want to make a small side note here and say that I'm down to discuss this, but I'm only going to discuss it from a Jewish perspective.

Lulav: Absolutely.

Jaz: Like, Christians weaponize this particular one all of the time and I have no patience for that

(Lulav laughs)

Jaz: I'm down to debate Jewish interpretations of it because I do think it's more possible to be Jewish and doing it in good faith.

Lulav: (tentatively) Say more?

Jaz: Well, I'm just saying that the people who were looking at, two verses up, "Do not come near a woman near her menstrual period," also literally don't do that. I don't agree with all of their interpretations but I do understand that the thing that they're doing is trying to be like, "well, we take all of the text seriously, every bit of it, even if it doesn't make any sense, and we recognize that it doesn't make any sense, but we're going to do it because G-d says so," which is why I'm down to debate Jewish people on it. I'm not down to debate Christian things on it because I am like, listen if you're not also having complicated discussions about niddah and menstrual stuff, you're not taking the text seriously. All of us are picking and choosing, yes, but look, the Talmud goes into detail about every single one of these laws, not just this one, and if Christians are only talking about this one, like... I don't care. I mean, I also don't care because I mostly only have arguments within my own religion?

Lulav: Mhm.

Jaz: But I do feel like Christians weaponize this one more and I don't have any patience for it.

Lulav: Yeah, so you're saying that you are more willing to talk to people about adherence to a homophobic text than people who are using a homophobic text as an excuse to be homophobic.

Jaz: Yes, and also I'm more willing to talk to people who I feel some sense of obligation to — like, my own community.

Lulav: Absolutely. Yeah, so can we just run down these and say how we personally feel about each of these five?

Jaz: Sure.

Lulav: Four? Four.

Jaz: Which four?

Lulav: Starting with 19, if that's okay.

Jaz: Yeah.

Lulav: Okay, so you shall not approach someone to uncover their nakedness while they are in their menstrual uncleanness.

Jaz: Mine translates, I'll just note, as "menstrual period of ritual impurity". We don't need to associate menstruating with uncleanness.

Lulav: Nice. I love that.

Jaz: Yeah.

Lulav: So, yeah, I'm cool with this as (laughingly) we have previously discussed.

Jaz: Yeah, we've talked about this already. Have we talked about the thing about mikvahs?

Lulav: Was there a specific thing that you wanted to bring up?

Jaz: I was just thinking about how there are corollaries how things can be ritually impure and the way we deal with those ritual impurities important to you is by just establishing ritual about, okay I guess that means you have to go to the mikvah every month.

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: You just kind of build structures around it

Lulav: Right

Jaz: And then also then you have to figure out what to do with those structures like when the mikvahs are closed for a global pandemic

Lulav: Yup

Jaz: But if those things are important to you you can just build structures

Lulav: Right. And how do you personally feel about this one?

Jaz: Oh, I'm not a fan.

(both laugh)

Lulav: Okay.

Jaz: I mean, I think it's a silly rule.

Lulav: Mmhm.

Jaz: Lots of things seem to be silly rules, lots of the time, and so my most flippant take on it is a thing I have said before, also, which is "this does not apply to me, because I am not a woman".

(Lulav laughs)

Jaz: Also, this does not apply if there are multiple women because the text only says one woman.

Lulav: Oh, baruch hashem.

Jaz: Yeah, I'm down to just a little bit define this one out of existence.

Lulav: *(laughs)* Okay. So what about "You shall not have sexual relations with your kinsman's wife" Uncool. *(Jaz laughs)* Real bad. Not the worst thing ever, imo? But like, don't do that.

Jaz: Mine seems to note another thing about that being defiling, which I wonder if again is like another ritual term (*Lulav hums in consideration*) type-of-deal, which does remind me a little bit of, well if you sleep with a person who is not your partner, you should go get STD tests before you sleep with your partner again.

Lulav: Mm, yeah. And, also, I find it really interesting that they're not talking about the interpersonal reasons for this. It's like don't have sexual relations with your kinsman's wife because... that's your kinsman's— what, like— you have to *live* with each other... (*Jaz laughs*)

Jaz: Mine also translates that as your neighbor's.

Lulav: Instead it just sort of focuses on defiling yourself. So I find that interesting.

Jaz: Yeah.

Lulav: Okay, so Jaz, how do you feel about prohibitions on sacrificing babies to Molech?

Jaz: Fine, good, let's not. The Torah clearly feels stronger about this one, too, because it includes, like, "don't do this in the name of G-d, I am G-d."

(*Lulav laughs*)

Jaz: Which it does not say for any of the other ones.

Lulav: Very fair so, yeah, I feel like we're on the same level here. How do you feel about lying with men as with women?

Jaz: Well, I pulled up so many interpretations.

Lulav: Okay.

Jaz: Can I read you actually a piece of commentary on this one?

Lulav: Yes please.

Jaz: I just thought it was very funny. So, this bit is from the Talmud, from [Nedarim 51a3](#). They were at a wedding and bar Kappara said to Rabbi Yehudah haNasi, “What’s the meaning of the word to’eva?” And then it says, “Whatever it was that Rabbi Yehuda haNasi said to bar Kappara in explanation, claiming that this is the meaning of *to’eva*, bar Kappara refuted it by proving otherwise. Rabbi Yehuda haNasi said to him, then: ‘Well, *you* explain it.’ Bar Kappara said to him: ‘Let your wife come and pour me a goblet of wine.’ She came and poured him wine. Bar Kappara then said to Rabbi Yehuda haNasi: ‘Arise and dance for me, so that I will tell you the meaning of the word.’”

Lulav: Okay. This has some *weird* energy.

(*Jaz laughs*)

Lulav: Like very unicorn hunty energy?

Jaz: “This is what the Merciful One is saying in the Torah after the word *to’eva*.” And they add “You are straying after it — to’eh atah bah.” This particular translation on Sefaria says, “i.e., after an atypical mate”. Which is to say, you were right about it having unicorn-hunting energy.

Lulav: (*laughs*) Wait, so is this saying don’t have threesomes?

Jaz: Well, I chose this particular one to read because as far as I can tell the thing that’s happening in this translation is that Rabbi Yehuda haNasi is offering his suggestions for what he thinks the word means and he is trying really earnestly to prove his point and bar Kappara is like, drinking and having a nice time, and he’s just like: “Hey, babe, I can tell you what that means. Want to dance with me and I’ll tell you and prove it to you by dancing with me? That’ll show you what the word means.”

Lulav: To be fair, when you said that, I got a tingle, so.

Jaz: Right? (*laughs*)

Lulav: Props to Bar Kappara. (*laughs*)

Jaz: Right?! Anyway, so I really enjoy that this particular rabbi decided that he can use this particular line from the Torah as a pickup line?

Lulav: (*laughs*, and then in her best sexy voice) Hey baby, want to be to'eva?

Jaz: (*laughs*) Anyway, isn't that beautiful?

Lulav: Good, thank you for this learning.

(*both laugh*)

(36:47)

Jaz: Yeah, anyway, so I've heard the one that you are offering about like don't be with a man in the same way you would be with a woman and I cannot remember who said this one to me but I enjoyed it as being one that was particularly noting you shouldn't be with someone while ignoring the gender that they are in particular about how there are straight dudes who are like "I will date assigned-female nonbinary people as long as I can continue to like think of them as women."

Lulav: Yeah or even trans men. I secondhand know somebody who had that experience, which is great.

Jaz: Gross.

Lulav: It's not great, it's bad.

Jaz: So there was that reading of it too, which I liked and appreciated.

Lulav: Yeah, so those are the good readings.

Jaz: Do you have any other points, and then I have a closing on this one

Lulav: No, I think the main thing that I read from this is what I mentioned before which is that it's just that don't have sex with men and women in the same way

Jaz: Hmm mm

Lulav: So this is a prohibition against pegging rather than anything more directly homophobic

Jaz: Hmmm okay

Lulav: But I like that you have introduced me to several more charitable interpretations

(Jaz laughs)

Jaz: Yes

Lulav: which I didn't even know could exist

Jaz: I have two more points about it and then I'll move on

Lulav: Yes please

Jaz: One of which is that the text is not shy about being like, and then if you do this thing, you will be cut off from the community or don't do this thing lest you die, it does it all over the place

Lulav: Yeah

Jaz: For things that we also don't get cut off from the community for

(Lulav laughs)

Jaz: And don't die about, but it does say those things and it absolutely does not bother here

L: Yeah

Jaz: AND also the text repeats things a bunch of times and explicates things a bunch of times and also doesn't do that here. It's here, but it's not an important don't here. We have 613 commandments, this is not a major one

(Lulav laughs)

L: Hey, Jaz, can you read the last clause of 18:23 in Hebrew?

Jaz: Yes

Lulav: Because they use another word there that the NSV translates as perversion

Jaz: The word there is tevel, which if you give em a second I will look up more in depth

Lulav: Cool thank you, anyway we didn't finish rating and I gotta say that this prohibition I am fine with, animals cannot consent.

Jaz: Oh yeah, also fine with it. They also note that tevel can sometimes be translated as perversion, is more commonly in other settings translated as confusion that is a violation of like order.

Lulav: Yeah, that sounds right

Jaz: Also I have a final comment about the word toevah, which is I think you can reinterpret it — I didn't steal this one from anybody, I came up with it wholesale, so

Lulav: Yay.

Jaz: Which is, words in Hebrew are allowed to be acronyms so I have made it an acronym.

(Lulav laughs)

Jaz: The letters here are tav vav ayin vet and hey so for tav: we have Torah, ti's Torah, for vav we have umadah "and secular rules." Yeshiva University says that its studies are Torah Umadah, so Torah and the study of secular things.

Lulav: Okay

Jaz: So those are one and two. Ayin is for oseh shalom

(Lulav laughs)

Jaz: Vet is for bimromav, and hey is for hallelujah

Lulav: It is Torah!

Jaz: It is Torah! And you're welcome

L :Thank you. Yeah so basically all of these things are put on other nations as practices that they do, by which they have defiled themselves. Yeah, I hate that the other rising of people by assuming that they are sex criminals

Jaz: Yeah

Lulav: And using that to justify genocide and stuff

Jaz: Yeah, there's a note of other people did this and also we have our ancestors noted as doing this in the text

(Lulav laughs)

Jaz: 18 over there is do not marry a woman as a rival to her sister and we definitely have Leah and Rachel

Lulav: Hey yeah!

Jaz: My text has a little footnote that's like, well he did this before they got this text! Which is a coward's excuse

Lulav: That was the dry run for it, and they were like wow, that sucked let's not do that again.

Jaz: Yeah, yeah

Lulav: So moving on

Jaz: Please

Lulav: So once again we have the double filtered speaking that you shouldn't cast images of gods because G-d is your god and that when you offer as sacrifice of well being, burn it up if you

don't eat it. Here's a fun one that was lightly touched on before but I don't think we went on it in depth. Don't harvest your entire field so that poor people can eat your food if they're just walking along and have no food of their own

Jaz: Yeah.

Lulav: Which is really cool.

Jaz: Do you recognize these particular commandments?

Lulav: I do not... Do these seem familiar to you?

Jaz: (laughs) These are the ten commandments.

Lulav: Wait, the one about food is part of the ten commandments?

Jaz: Well, I don't think it's actually in it the first time we get it

Lulav: Okay, yes

Jaz: But the rest of it, definitely all is

Lulav: Oh, 7,8, 9, 10, nice cool!

Jaz: We have gone through all of these before. This is, I believe, the second time we've gotten it. They're not in the same order and I don't know if the harvesting was included in the first ten.

Lulav: I distinctly remember it being mentioned at least

Jaz: Let's go check

Lulav: Thank you

Jaz: I turned right to it. Hmm... no, it wasn't and last time we instead got a more extrapolation on the Shabbat thing and the no idols thing

Lulav: But here we get explication on all of it, and especially the right action to other people's stuff.

Jaz: Yeah and arguably if you had to fold the harvest and the gleaning thing into one of these ten commandments

Lulav: Can you give me a verse reference for where the ten commandments are again?

Jaz: Yeah

Lulav: It's Shmot...

Jaz: 20

Lulav: Shemot 20. <makes sound effects while turning pages> Oh okay. I think this ties into Shabbat actually

Jaz: Oh say more?

Lulav: And again I cannot remember what verse is reminding me of this but basically we're commanded somewhere to work six days and have extra leftover for the seventh so that all can be fed

Jaz: Okay

Lulav: And so I think the partial harvesting of the field is part of that . You keep Shabbat by preparing so that there is extra in your environs so that everyone can have a restful day

Jaz: That's lovely. I love that interpretation. I was going to go with folding it into "you shall not steal"

Lulav: Okay

Jaz: That not all of those things are yours

Lulav: Hmmm

Jaz: In Kedoshim we have this bit about, When you harvest, you have to leave the edges, I am G-d, you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger” And it follows it up with, “You shall not steal and you shall not deal deceitfully or falsely with one another”

Lulav: Okay

Jaz: So I was looking at it as you have to leave those things because they're not all your thing. You owe those things to other people and particularly you owe them to people who can't afford them and to people who don't have means of sustenance in your community - i.e., the poor and the stranger here and so holding onto all of it would be de facto stealing it

Lulav: That's really cool

Jaz: Can we do the next bit?

Lulav: Yes, so yeah, leave food in your field, don't steal, don't deal falsely, don't lie and the don't steal is restated et again like don't defraud your neighbor and a really important one is you shall not revile the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind. YOU shall fear your G-d. I am the Eternal.

Jaz: Yeah!

(45:21)

Lulav: SO I think this gets back to the whole thing that we were talking about when Moshe is called to lead the people, which is that this is the G-d of meeting you where you're at and providing assistive technology.

Jaz: Yeah.

Lulav: And moreover, don't mess with disabled people. That's... I'm trying to remember what words I can say when this isn't tagged explicit. That's a bad move and you should feel bad if you do it.

Jaz: It is. I have two questions about this part.

Lulav: Okay.

Jaz: because I also think that there's a lot here in this bit. There is some traditional commentary that treats this line sort of metaphorically of don't give self-serving advice to someone who's ignorant, don't take advantage of people who don't know better, stuff like that, and other various deceitful practices (lulav chuckles) but there's also very literal disability stuff that it seems like it could offer, so my question to you is do you think this verse is more powerful if you look at it more metaphorically or if you take it more literally?

Lulav: Literally! And from the literal reading, you can extrapolate other things. Like, you're not supposed to revile the deaf, while I think here means speak facing away from them and not include them in the conversation.

Jaz: mm

Lulav: And moving things around such that they're an obstruction to people who have trouble sensing their environment. That also applies to mobility-impaired people. Don't just leave backpacks in the aisle or whatever.

Jaz: mm hmm

Lulav: This central principle of include people and also don't not include them. That can be extrapolated to so many things, including I think, don't give self-serving advice to somebody who is not going to interpret it deeply.

Jaz: Mm hmm.

Lulav: Yeah. I don't know. Just meet people where they're at, is my reading.

Jaz: yeah. And I also like that there's some literalism three of stumbling blocks, because we still have literal things. Disability rights activist needed to agitate for curb cuts, you know?

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: And not all places are wheelchair accessible, and — we could take this verse very literally and derive a lot of power from it.

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: BUt my second question is, because it says very literally, you shall not insult a deaf or place a stumbling block before the blind, then there appears to be, literarily speaking, an abled person probably? So, does that mean that the inverse of that is, are disabled people allowed to insult and cause to stumble abled people?

Lulav: No! (Jaz laughs) Absolutely not! This is intracommunity violence! (Jaz laughs) Yeah, I really don't think that the you there is specifically abled people.

Jaz: Okay, please make this case to me, because I feel like it is, and it bothers me.

Lulav: Well, we have you in every single commandment here and it's not like the person commanded to not defraud their neighbor is only people who have something to gain from their neighbor, it's YOU, generally speaking, all of you shall not defraud your neighbor.

Jaz: Okay, but when we had those ones earlier about you shall not do this to your kinsperson or whatever, lots of those were pretty explicitly directed towards men.

Lulav: Yeah. There was a whole lot of assuming maleness, which sucks. Is this maybe in the context of women weren't full people within the practice of Judaism as these texts were canonized?

Jaz: I... don't like that one. I don't want that to be my interpretation.

Lulav: (laughs) Cuz I think that's borne out in how women are talked about as people that something is done to rather than people who do things, so I think that the only reason that all of those other commandments are speaking to men in particular is that it's assumed that all of these are speaking to men because women just don't have the head for Torah.

Jaz: mmm (groans)

Lulav: Which is atrocious and something that we absolutely should reject. But that's why I'm so in favor of a universal interpretation.

Jaz: Okay.

Lulav: Can we move on?

Jaz: Please.

Lulav: So don't make unjust judgements... here's an interesting thing. "You shall not be partial to the poor nor defer to the great."

Jaz: Yours says, "to the great?"

Lulav: It's the NRSV. (laughs) With justice you shall judge your neighbor. What does your say?

Jaz: SO my translation says show deference to the rich. The word there is "gadol," as is "big" or "large."

Lulav: Yeah. The bigwigs.

Jaz: (laughs) Yeah.

Lulav: SO yeah. THis is interesting I guess, in the sense that partiality means pre-litigating things, I absolutely agree with this.

Jaz: Say more?

Lulav: Just because somebody is part of a marginalized group doesn't mean that they can't hurt other people.

Jaz: Yes. Okay, yeah.

Lulav: It's liek the whole thing with like, some gay men are very handsy with women.

Jaz: Right.

Lulav: And then they're like, ahaha, I'm gay, it doesn't mean anything, but like, they're still violating people's bodies.

Jaz: Right, yeah.

Lulav: And so, you can't just assume that because somebody is marginalized in one way, they are blameless in all disputes that might come up.

Jaz: Right. Speaking of blameless, the next bit —

Lulav: Which specific next bit?

Jaz: You shall not hate your kinsfolk in your heart. Reprove your kin, but incur no guilt on their account.

Lulav: Yeah! Which seems to support community-centered justice-seeking.

Jaz: Well, how are you thinking about this? BEcause I'm thinking about what does it mean to incur no guilt? Does that mean that you're not responsible for them or that you are responsible for them? What does it mean to set yourself up in such a way that you bear no guilt?

Lulav: So what my translation says is you shall no hate in your heart any one of your kin. You shall reprove your neighbor or you will incur guilt yourself. So I think what this translation is interpreting it as is if you don't reprove your neighbor you are guilty for their actions, Like you can't just stand by when you know somebody's doing wrong stuff. You have to like, actually talk to them about it.

Jaz: Mmmmm. There is a Talmud bit about this one.

Lulav: Okay.

Jaz: And also I got into an argument with a rabbi once about this. There is a rabbinic argument about how you do that and one rabbi is quoted as saying you have to do it in a way that they'll listen to and one rabbi says okay, but nobody knows how to listen and one of the rabbis says nobody knows how to say things such that people would be able to listen to them, and they're like, how are we commanded to reprove people, tell them off but also no one knows how to and also no one knows how to accept reproof and also ahhhh.

Lulav: *(laughs)* Yeah. When I think about this verse, I am thinking about explicitly wrong things, like if you know that somebody in your social circles is doing sex crimes, you confront them about it and make sure that they don't hurt anybody, rather than just having a broken step.

Jaz: Sure.

Lulav: That's an old kink community metaphor about like, the staircase has a broken step on it but it's not visibly broken and so new people will just walk down the staircase and fall through the broken step because nobody's telling them.

Jaz: Yeah, I'll link to it. It's a good metaphor and article and also it's like, also, if I recall correctly, a thing about how people don't rid of people in their communities who are actively causing harm and instead they're just like, we have all learned and we all remember to skip that step and are like, oh, that's just that person doing their thing.

Lulav: Mm hmm.

Jaz: But new people won't know that and we're not dealing with the actual problem.

Lulav: Anyway! I like the interpretation of you shall reprove your neighbor or you will incur guilt yourself rather than the interpretation rather than you shall reprove your neighbor but

you will incur guilt? Or, in a way that you won't incur guilt? What was the one that you were saying?

Jaz: Well, the translation here is reprove your kin but incur no guilt on their account.

Lulav: Okay, yeah.

Jaz: Or it could be reprove your neighbor and incur no guilt on their account. There's just a vav there. It's a "ve'lo tisha."

Lulav: Yeah. I much prefer the "and" to the "but."

Jaz: Okay.

Lulav: Because it makes sense as a dichotomy rather than as two things that you should do?

Jaz: Mm.

Lulav: Okay. Here's a fun thing that we haven't done in a while: animal husbandry! (*Jaz laughs*) Don't make mules and don't hybridize your vegetables and then also don't wear polyester. Oh wait, no, is polyester the one that's a mix of multiple fabrics?

Jaz: No, it isn't, but that was a nice try

Lulav: What's the thing that I'm thinking of?

Jaz: Um... I don't —

Lulav: Don't wear a poly cotton blend! (*laughs*)

Jaz: Sure. They do actually give pretty narrow specifications for it later as like, don't do wool and linen blend. Poly cotton blend is probably fine.

Lulav: Okay. Oh, here's another thing that we blessedly haven't done in awhile which is slavery rules (*Jaz sighs*) If a man has sexual relations with a woman who is a slave designated for another man but not ransomed or given her freedom, an inquiry shall be held. They shall not be put to death, since she has not been freed, and I guess the implication there is she's not a person. But he shall bring a guilt offering for himself to the Eternal at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting. So... yeah. If you do sex crimes on a slave who hasn't been coerced into marrying you, you owe the priests a sacrifice.

Jaz: Uh... this one's bad.

(*Lulav laughs*)

Lulav: Thanks, I didn't explicitly state that. Thank you for doing that. I was relying on tone of voice.

Jaz: We were rating things earlier and I'm just putting in a vote that this one's bad.

Lulav: So when you come into land and plant a bunch of different trees, their fruit is forbidden for three years and then for the fourth year, you rejoice in the Lord with it, and then finally in the fifth year, you can eat the fruit.

Jaz: Do we have to go through all of them quite that detailed? There are so many. I am so tired.

Lulav: Yeah, me too. Don't sell your daughter into sex work. Oh yes! Now we get to the wizards thing (*Jaz laughs*) Do not turn to mediums or wizards. Do not seek them out or be defiled by them.

Jaz: Also grow payos.

Lulav: Also what?

Jaz: "Men shall not round off the side growth on your head or destroy the side growth of your beard."

Lulav: Oh, grow payos. Where is it saying that?

Jaz: Right after wizards!

Lulav: Oh yeah, I skipped over some stuff. I'm so sorry. Yeah, here's one that I know a lot of Jews ignore which is don't' get a side shave and don't' get tattoos. I think the phrase here of for the dead where it says "you shall not make any gashes in your flesh for the dead" is an important reading there because that's just like a self harming mourning practice so the way I'm interpreting this is as long as you don't get in memoriam tattoos it's fine.

Jaz: I don't think that that's what it's saying and I'm also not about to be rude about people's memorial tattoos.

Lulav: Yeah, they're pretty cool actually. I realized halfway through saying that that, no, memorial tattoos are really cool.

Jaz: Yeah, I think it says it somewhere more explicitly somewhere else but the idea that G-d doesn't want you to do cuts in your flesh specifically feels different to me than tattoos.

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: And I like that.

Lulav: Okay and the highlight of the rest of this is that if an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress them. "Stranger" is the way that your text translates it right?

Jaz: Yes.

Lulav: So when a stranger resides with you, don't oppress them. They are like you. You were strangers in the land of Egypt. And this is something that we've heard a lot.

Jaz: The word here by the way is ger. We have other words for things that are particularly idolatrous like when Aaron's sons were burned by fire it was a different word. This is just

about how when there are people who are living with you who aren't Jewish, you have to be.

Lulav: Be cool to them.

Jaz: Yeah.

Lulav: Did you have more you wanted to talk about there?

Jaz: Just that they have expectations also, a little bit of they're citizens and such as, if this is a people with codes of conduct, they're part of the code of conduct too, they're also not supposed to sacrifice people to Molech or whatever. *(Lulav laughs)* Yeah.

Lulav: Yeah, that is definitely a takeaway from here. So speaking of Molech, we get to the homestretch which is Hashem saying to Moshe to say to Yisrael that you really, really cannot be sacrificing to a different god and if you do G-d will set Zer face against you and cut you off from the people and as we remember from a previous parsha, seeing G-d is kind of fatal.

Jaz: True! Also I just had a flash here of someone in an Edna voice going "No wizards!"

Lulav: *(laughs, then, impersonating Edna Mode from The Incredibles)* No wizards! *(Jaz laughs)* Good. Edna's my middle name, by the way.

Jaz: Really?

Lulav: I don't know if I've mentioned that before. Yeah! It's a very good name and was also my grandma's name.

Jaz: That's lovely.

Lulav: Yeah. Zichrona livracha.

Jaz: Mm.

Lulav: Oh, which means that my initials are LEA, also.

(59:17)

Jaz: Nice!

Lulav: Anyway! Don't mess around with wizards, number two. And there's stuff about putting people to death for adultery. Just a lot of restatements of stuff that's already happened, but specifically with the punishment for them, which is death.

Jaz: Yeah. Gotta restate: the gay one? Not restated. Not punished.

Lulav: (*smugly*) Mm hmm. Every other one from that section is. Not the gay one.

Jaz: Including the menstruation one — anyway, continue, sorry.

Lulav: Yeah! So like, we're textually supported (*Jaz laughs*) when we were like, "eh, those— those are okay." So yeah, do it forever and make sure you do it and in exchange you get a land flowing with milk and honey. Distinguish between clean and unclean things or ritually pure and ritually impure things and just one last note: no wizards! Kill the wizards!

Jaz: Ugh, no wizards. We have made it through. This has been such a journey. Thank you for taking it with me.

Lulav: Oh boy.

Jaz: Finally, it is time for Rating G-d's Writing, the segment in which we rate this experience on two scales. So Lulav, out of 50 interpretations for the same verse, (*Lulav laughs*) how many interpretations would you give this double parsha?

Lulav: I'd give it 20, because the thing with a lot of this parsha — and the thing with a lot of interpretations of the particular verse that we had like 50 on — is that it's very punitive and adversarial and just like, hey this sucks. But there are ways to read this parsha that are focused on justice and minimizing or writing out the bigoted parts, so I like those 20 out of 50 interpretations.

Jaz: Mmmm.

Lulav: But otherwise this was an effing slog.

Jaz: Okay.

Lulav: Jaz, out of three wizards who are expressly forbidden by Hashem, how many wizards would you rate this parsha?

Jaz: I would give it two wizards.

Lulav: Okay.

Jaz: Two very very forbidden wizards dancing at a wedding.

Lulav: (*laughs*) Good.

Jaz: And I think I would do that because we have to do so much work with these parshas to make it work for us.

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: So I can't give it full measure by any means, but also there's so much here and there's so much that's rich and beautiful in between —

Lulav: *(laughs)* all the nasty stuff?

Jaz: Well, and also part of the process of what I love about Judaism, part of what I think it means to be Am Yisrael, right, “Yisrael” is like, literally “struggling with G-d”, the idea that what we're doing is struggling with the text and making 50 interpretations and figuring out how it's going to work and like, that that in and of itself is a beautiful and holy process.

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: And that this is a parsha that has us do it more offers up opportunities...and I don't want to diminish the ways in which things have happened here that have also been really horrifying and used in ways that have been really weaponizing against people for so many years and we're really stuck with that? But I also think that now it's ours, right? *(Lulav hums contentedly)* You know, like, we have Torah from Sinai and then they gave it to us and then we get to do whatever with it.

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: And I appreciate the opportunity to do so.

Lulav: It's very good. So I just want to clarify — would you say that out of these three wizards, you are turning t(w)o of them? *(Jaz laughs)* And are therefore defiled by your rating?

Jaz: Uh, like —

Lulav: For does it not say in the Torah “do not turn t(w)o mediums or wizards!?”

Jaz: It does not say. *(Lulav laughs)* And also even if it did, it's in my hands now.

Lulav: That's fair. No matter how wizardphobic I am, *(Jaz laughs)* truly your interpretation is Torah as well. *(laughs)*

Jaz: Yeah. Alright. Are we ready to end this thing?

Lulav: Baruch hashem, and Jaz, please take us to the close.

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

Lulav: Our full transcripts are done by some combination of DiCo, Jaz, and Khesed, and regardless of who does them, they're definitely accessible through our episode descriptions on Buzzsprout!

Jaz: I'm Jaz Twersky and you can find me @WordNerdKnitter on Twitter. I recorded this audio on the traditional lands of the Ohlone 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, very queer, Jewish day!

[Brivele outro music]

Jaz: This week's gender is: interpretive dance.

Lulav: This week's pronouns are: zey and zeyr.