

Lulav: Howdy, Jaz.

Jaz: Hey, Lulav. What's something cool or queer or Jewish that happened to you this week?

Lulav: We're adopting Kat.

Jaz: Excuse me?

Lulav: You may remember from having been here, or if you are a listener to the show from me talking about Theo's cool girlfriend, that Kat is currently on the West Coast, and she doesn't have a lot of money, and therefore doesn't have a lot of ability to decide where she lives, and so we are adopting her, because the last couple living situations have been a little suboptimal. Theo and I have been talking her through the rough stuff, and we're excited to have her come live in Theo's bedroom.

Jaz: Oh, wow.

Lulav: Yeah. Is this the first time I'm mentioning this to you?

Jaz: Yes! (*laughs*)

Lulav: Right. Anyway. (*laughs*) Yeah, this shouldn't be that big of a change because Kat already stayed here for, like, three weeks, and was great, except for now she would just live here.

Jaz: Wow, when would that happen?

Lulav: Good question. Maybe in, like, three weeks? We'll see.

Jaz: Whoa, that's so soon.

Lulav: Right? Yeah, no, she's just had a rough time. Again, when you don't have the economic means to choose where you live, you're kind of at the mercy of whoever does.

Jaz: Mm-hmm.

Lulav: And while that is still true for her, we figured that we could give her a better place. Kat's really cool. I enjoyed hanging out with her last time she was here. We went on a drive, trying to get me my meds and picking something up from a local shop for them and Theo. And we just, like, chatted and memed at each other and it was great.

Jaz: That's lovely.

Lulav: So this is variably cool, definitely queer, and I'm Jewish, I dunno. (*both laugh*)

Jaz: Is this, like, a temporary or more permanent move, or do you know yet?

Lulav: I don't really know yet. We're behaving as though it is a permanent move, and we'll see where she goes from here.

Jaz: Wow.

Lulav: Also, I was telling her stuff about how the situation that they're in is not their fault, and they were really touched by that and gave me a playlist of two hours of math rock. (*Jaz laughs*) So, that's great.

Jaz: Yes.

Lulav: I listened to it, and it's good. It varies between, like, math rock and Midwest emo. There are a lot of numbers in the titles.

Jaz: Okay.

Lulav: Also, there's a song called "Fire Back About Your New Baby's Sex," which, I—

Jaz: What?

Lulav: Yeah, I'd have to look at the lyrics for that, or maybe it's an instrumental, but at least my uneducated read of that title is like, "Okay, cool. This is in keeping with the Kosher Queers opposition to gender-reveal parties."

Jaz: Yes. Sure.

Lulav: (*laughs*) Anyway, Jaz, what's something cool and queer or Jewish that's happened in your life recently?

Jaz: Well, I'm on vacation with my family. Both of my moms and my brother and our very good family friends, CB and Pat —

Lulav: Woo!

Jaz: People who are very close to me and have been part of my life for a really long time; and four of those people are lesbians a generation older than me. (*Lulav laughs*) And yesterday, my brother was busy with some work, so it was just me hanging out with the four of them at the beach, which was super lovely. It was a really nice beach. And the beach is a nice outing, because you can be, like, outside and maskless, but not near anybody--

Lulav: Mm-hmm.

Jaz: A pretty low risk of transmitting anything.

Lulav: Unless it's skin cancer, but you tend to be pretty good about sunscreen, right?

Jaz: Yes, we were all very sunscreened, so...

Lulav: Congrats.

Jaz: One of my moms freaked out a little bit about maybe getting touched by a fish.

Lulav: *(laughs)* Was it Lily?

Jaz: Yes. And—

Lulav: Do you know why I guessed that?

Jaz: Why?

Lulav: 'Cause I would also get *(both laugh)* grossed out by being touched by a fish.

Jaz: She was very concerned that it might be a shark. The water we were in was maybe two feet tall.

Lulav: *(laughs)* A small shark. You know.

Jaz: And then we sat on the beach for a while and ended up talking about, like, the nature of queerness—

Lulav: Mm!

Jaz: And we definitely did not agree on all of the things—

Lulav: Oh yeah?

Jaz: But it was nice to be able to do that and feel like, you know, we were coming from a place of, like, everybody loving each other, it wasn't like somebody was out there trolling or being mean or whatever, but also, they have really different perspectives from having lived different lives at different points in time. So—

Lulav: Yeah, having these conversations with people you love, but also having different opinions is simultaneously, more and less painful.

Jaz: It's one of those things where sometimes you meet people who talk about, like, queer elders in our circles, and being a person who's grown up with lesbians a generation older than me, just around, I think sometimes those people have this, like, idea of what other people are like that's not really reflected in—

Lulav: —actual queer elders?

Jaz: Yeah. (*Lulav laughs*) I don't know that any of those people would describe themselves as queer elders; I actually think they find that kind of off-putting.

Lulav: Mm-hmm.

Jaz: But I do think there's things to be learned from people who are older than you--

Lulav: Mm-hmm.

Jaz: But sometimes people also talk about, well, I would have been able to figure something out so much sooner, and I would have felt mentored and like-- (*Lulav laughs*) My identity is sufficiently different than my parents--

Lulav: Uh-huh.

Jaz: --that, you know, I also didn't come out until college, and I also took some time to figure stuff out, and I also relate differently to things.

Lulav: Mm-hmm.

Jaz: Like, CB was talking about how, when she was growing up, queer was just a slur and she can't really relate to it differently than that.

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: And that wasn't true when I was growing up, and the thing people would toss around when they were trying to be mean at you was "gay."

Lulav: Mm-hmm.

Jaz: So it was just, like, a really different type of relationship, and also, you know, I relate to the idea of bisexuality differently. (*Lulav laughs*) Partly because I didn't feel the kind of pressures of "it would be a bad thing to be gay."

Lulav: Mm-hmm.

Jaz: So I didn't have any concern about, "Well, I have to be bisexual because otherwise it'd be a lesbian and that would be bad."

Lulav: Mmm.

Jaz: You know, I wouldn't have been worried about being a lesbian, I just happened not to be one. *(Lulav laughs)* But that's because I was raised in a very lucky environment, in a very lucky household, and also, 30 years later, so--

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: It's different.

Lulav: Yeah. That's really interesting.

Jaz: And it also felt like a real affirmation to me of, like, "Wow, you should never get in arguments with other people on the internet, because it's tricky enough to have it in-person with people you love and trust."

Lulav: Uh-huh. And be like, "Wait, what are our common reference points here? Are we talking about the same things? Also, this is a little painful."

Jaz: And I really believe in having hard conversations.

Lulav: Mm-hmm.

Jaz: But I think you need to create the structures for them to be meaningful conversations where you're working through difficult things together, rather than just yelling at people.

Lulav: *(laughs)* Mm-hmm.

Jaz: And on that note, let's talk complicated conversations in the episode.

(Brivele intro)

Lulav: Welcome to Kosher Queers, a podcast with at least two Jews and generally more than three opinions. Each week we bring you queer takes on Torah. They're Jaz--

Jaz: --and she's Lulav--

Lulav: --and we're here to joke about Judaism and talk Tanakh together. Today, our chevruta is learning the haftarah of Ki Teitzei, which is Yeshiyahu 54:1 to 54:10.

Jaz: But Lulav, that sounds so familiar to me. Didn't we do that same segment of text ages ago, in episode 52?

Lulav: Why, yes, Jaz. And, unlike the haftarah of parashat Re'eh, where we decided to do an episode about Shabbat, we decided that these 10 lines are, like, on-theme enough that we can talk about queer futurity instead. So, I can summarize parashat Ki Teitzei, if you would like.

Jaz: Please do.

Lulav: Hit me with 90 seconds. One minute, 30 seconds. Not, like I did for you, one hour, 30 minutes.

Jaz: 3, 2, 1, go.

Lulav: This episode of *Words and Stuff*: care and keeping of your spouse-shaped war winnings, not making Yaakov's mistake, dealing with nasty boys, and not getting too too into capital punishment. Help your neighbors out, don't force your daughter to wear a tie to shul, hunt for subsistence, build in safety measures, grapes are very competitive, use the right tool for the right job, tie tzitzit, flog lying men but kill lying women, and uh, here's the static instead of parsing really loaded virginity standards. (*makes static noises*) No marrying stepmoms, no eunuchs nor bastards in your congregation, definitely no foreigners, unless the kind we like. Don't nut or poop in camp. Do house runaway slaves. Don't do pro-bono sex or donate the proceeds of sex work to the temple, 'cause that's a little too Assyrian. Don't charge countrymen interest, do discharge your matters swiftly and fully, and don't try to sneak takeaway from a buffet. Don't get back with your exes, don't get married before deployment, don't require livelihood as collateral, kill people who enslave your cousins, listen to your dermatologists, don't do lashon hara about people's dark-skinned wives, let collateral or payment come to you. Pay undocumented workers as well as you would documented ones, be responsible for your own actions. For the *fourth time*, don't be a dick about loans. Donate your overflow and, again, cool it with the capital punishment. Let employees control their lunch breaks, do levirate marriage, don't touch a ball in anger, deal honestly, and don't commit war crimes! Done.

Jaz: Nicely done. Slightly over.

Lulav: Noooo! (*laughs*)

Jaz: Very slightly.

Lulav: Okay.

Jaz: All right. Well, how, if at all, does that relate to our Consolation?

Lulav: So... hmm. The parsha talks about right action in marriage, and like, recompense. I think specifically there's like, Levirate marriage, and how you turn down a Levirate marriage and get

hit with a sandal in the town square. Just a lot of stuff about who you do and don't owe things to, and who you can and can't forsake?

Jaz: Okay.

Lulav: And this haftarah talks about what happens to the children of the wife forlorn — the like, less-loved wife. That's the part that I was talking about with not making Yaakov's mistake. If you decide that you're gonna have firstborn inheritance, you can't change that decision when you have a kid from a more-appreciated wife that you like better.

Jaz: Mmm.

Lulav: That's not how that works. So, similarly here, the offspring of the barren wife who is not beloved will expand to make a great people.

Jaz: Okay.

Lulav: Does that seem like a reasonable connection, or are you like, "Lulav, come on."

Jaz: You know, I'm sitting with it, I'm open to it.

Lulav: (*laughs*) Okay. So we are shouting, "Oh, barren one, you who bore no child," which is very, like, relatable as a queer person who is about to become very definitely neutered forever.

Jaz: Mmm.

Lulav: (*laughs*) I think we talked about this in Episode 52, but just, you know, I have never been able to bear a child, and I definitely am not able to create a child, like, at any part of that process. And also, I, like, feel really weird about bringing a child into this particular world instead of, you know, adopting one of the children that already exists. So there're just a bunch of layers to that, but we're shouting aloud for joy, because our children shall outnumber those of the espoused, hohoho. Which, like, in the context of Tanakh, that's definitely a good thing. And so, in order to work with that large numbering, we need to enlarge the site of our tent, and make our dwelling bigger. Don't stint on making a big tent for everyone.

Jaz: Hmm.

Lulav: Because we're gonna spread out everywhere. It says, "Your offspring shall dispossess nations and shall people the desolate towns," which is like... Eh?

Jaz: Eh.

Lulav: But also, this is definitely what people think, like--

Jaz: "The Jews will replace you"?

Lulav: Hmm. This is definitely what homophobes think that queer people will do, and also, yeah, definitely antisemites think will happen of Jews. And definitely in the case of homophobes and queer people generally, that's something where I'm fine dispossessing nations and peopling the desolate towns.

Jaz: Uh-huh.

Lulav: Like, if it's a choice between assimilation and destroying the fabric of society? That fabric already had some holes in it, let's get ripplin'. (*Jaz laughs*) Realistically, it's not a dichotomy, but. So yeah. Don't fear, don't cringe, you're not gonna remember the shame, and you're gonna be redeemed. Is there anything here that you particularly want to talk about?

Jaz: Well — so, you went through all of that real fast.

Lulav: Mm-hmm.

Jaz: But I think there is some real interesting things there.

Lulav: Okay.

Jaz: For example, at the beginning, we have this piece as you were talking about, about the barren one--

Lulav: Mm-hmm.

Jaz: And how the children of the wife forlorn shall outnumber, and one of the things that's so funky about that is, of course, right — implicitly, "barren" is somebody who can't have children.

Lulav: Mm-hmm.

Jaz: Whose children will nevertheless outnumber, and I know that this is sometimes, you know, easily read in terms of the Jacob verse, but it's also, to your point, a pretty pro-adoption verse.

Lulav: (*laughs*) Yeah.

Jaz: And it's also one that works well for reading of gayness, because, you know, for gay people who can't have children, which is a not-insignificant number of people --

Lulav: Mm-hmm.

Jaz: Right? There will be more gay people, even if no gay people ever had children.

Lulav: (*laughs*) Yeah. Where else did we come from?

Jaz: Right. So, you know, on the one hand, yes, like being able to have children is a blessing --

Lulav: Mm-hmm.

Jaz: — for people who want them, and on the other hand, shout aloud for joy because you're going to prevail anyway.

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: We know when we look at statistics that there are more queer people in the younger generations than in the previous ones.

Lulav: More queer people who, A, know that about themselves and B, express that to pollsters. Right?

Jaz: Yes. Yes. But also, in general (*Lulav laughs*) know that about themselves.

Lulav: Also, the imagery calls back to Sarah, who was barren, but then she had a child anyway--

Jaz: Mm-hmm.

Lulav: Which just feels a lot like, you know, people being like, "Oh, you're gay? Guess you're not gonna have kids," and some people respond to that with, "Heck no I'm not," and some people respond to that with, "Dude, an adopted child is still your child," and some people respond to that with, "I physically can so I'm gonna figure out a way."

Jaz: Uh-huh.

Lulav: There's just a multiplicity of ways in which you can shout aloud for joy.

Jaz: Mm-hmm.

Lulav: Yeah, and a multiplicity of ways in which you can make sure that you have a vibrant community that keeps growing, one that doesn't stint when it enlarges its tent, and one that needs to enlarge its tent.

Jaz: Right. And this is also a thing that I had some debate about, about... what does it mean to enlarge your tent. Part of the reason I like "queer" as a word is that it feels very all-encompassing.

Lulav: Mm-hmm.

Jaz: But also, I got some pushback about, like, if a lot of people are claiming the word queer, and that doesn't mean anything to them — like, that they live a life that is indistinguishable from a cis heterosexual, it doesn't inform their life, then what does it mean?

Lulav: So, sorry, the thing that you're phrasing there is that, like, questioning the bihets, or is that "if everybody is queer then nobody is queer"?

Jaz: Hmm.

Lulav: Or did I interrupt you in the middle of a thought that required a little more?

Jaz: I don't want to misrepresent the opinions of people who aren't here --

Lulav: Mm-hmm.

Jaz: But I think that it is partially about, like, people who ID as bisexual but that doesn't look in any particular practical way for them, and also, partly a political statement, of, like --

Lulav: Mm-hmm.

Jaz: What does your queerness mean to you?

Lulav: Yeah. And definitely my inclination leads more towards, queerness should be a thing that you actively claim, something where you realize ways in which you are othered by dominant narratives of sexuality and gender and you're like, "I'm outside that," and I am, you know, hesitant to extend the terminology of queer to specific people who may not be part of that, but also it is a great umbrella term.

Jaz: Mm-hmm.

Lulav: And can you talk a little bit about like, what it is to you? Like, do you remember where you first heard queer as, like, a positive thing?

Jaz: I don't remember. My guess would be that it was in late high school.

Lulav: Hm.

Jaz: And I know that one of the things that appealed to me about the word "queer" is it was so deliberately all-encompassing --

Lulav: Mm-hmm.

Jaz: — and it was a thing I vibed with a lot as I was figuring out different parts of who I am, and it's a thing partially I vibe with now, even though I have more specific terminology --

Lulav: Mm-hmm.

Jaz: — because I don't necessarily always want to get into all of the specific terminology (*Lulav laughs*) that sometimes it's easier not to say, I'm bisexual and I'm nonbinary and I'm trans, and I may be a smaller label under nonbinary and trans, you know? Like --

Lulav: Mm-hmm.

Jaz: Or the way that some people use the split-attraction model, and I guess they could do that, but I'd just end up saying, I'm bisexual and biromantic, and that seems unnecessary to me. (*Lulav laughs*) So, I will own any of those words, but sometimes I like saying "I'm queer" because it places me in deliberate coalition with people who don't necessarily share all of those exact labels, but I care about their wellbeing and I want them to care about my wellbeing and I think --

Lulav: Mm-hmm.

Jaz: — like, as people smarter than me have said, our liberation is bound up in each other. (*Lulav laughs*) So, that is part of what I like about it.

Lulav: Yeah. I think with any label, there is some amount of semiotic refinement. Like, especially with "heterosexual" and "homosexual" — those are derived from medical contexts where it's, like, really trying to separate lines that might be more blurred, and like, depending on the community you're coming from, bisexual may or may not have that kind of medical background, and like, attempt to really separate things, but like, once you get into "queer," it's, by its nature, saying, we don't need to, you know, stop and pick apart, exactly what everything is, we can just kind of exist around it. Did that make any sense?

Jaz: Sort of. (*Lulav laughs*) Yeah, I think there's also a certain amount of: we won't find something that works equally well for everybody --

Lulav: Mm-hmm.

Jaz: So, you have to make choices, and also, acknowledge that there might be people who you want to include that don't love your choices, and then figure out how to communicate about that and exist in that productive tension.

Lulav: Mm-hmm.

Jaz: *And* recognize that often the problem isn't actually just the word. It's bigger than that.

Lulav: (*laughs*) Yeah. Were we still talking about the first five lines there?

Jaz: Yeah. In particular we were focused on the first two.

Lulav: Daaang. All right. Love that. Jaz, how big is the tent that you want to see in a good queer future?

Jaz: I would like a really large tent. I would like to see lots of different kinds of queer people --

Lulav: Mm-hmm.

Jaz: — who are exploring different facets and being creative with their identities --

Lulav: Mm-hmm.

Jaz: — and who look at other people and don't tell them what they can be or who they can be, but just accept that we can all be here, and it's good for people to engage in self-exploration and our labels are for us. And so, I envision a big tent, and also one with, like, little side-rooms that you can optionally go into.

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: And it's always easy to set up more.

Lulav: Yeah. Like, my metaphorical image here is, you know, the bigger you make attempt the more resembles the whole world, which is already a tent that we are in.

Jaz: What?

Lulav: So --

Jaz: Sure.

Lulav: — it is better to focus on making the tents that you have good for you, making new tents when there's some kind of weather outside or inside that works better for you, which is to say, exactly the same thing as yours. A lot of room for people to experiment. And I think also, you know, making a tent requires an investment of resources.

Jaz: Yeah.

Lulav: And so, I think whoever is making these metaphorical tents, that's important. It's important to have people who like, know who they are and have opinions about that.

Jaz: Yeah.

Lulav: But also can welcome in other people who may or may not stay, who may or may not be a carbon copy.

Jaz: I recently learned --

Lulav: Mm-hmm?

Jaz: — that the biggest LGBT organization in Boston, where I just moved to, either just shut down or is about to shut down --

Lulav: Oh.

Jaz: In large part because they weren't willing to grow and evolve, which in practice, meant that they were real racist —

Lulav: Mmm.

Jaz: — and unsupportive of trans people in their community, and so, they stopped being supported by their local community.

Lulav: Mm-hmm.

Jaz: And, you know, I might have preferred for an organization to grow and change, (*Lulav laughs*) but if it refuses to grow and change, I guess it's good that it's going, and I hope it gets replaced by something better.

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: So.

Lulav: Thanks for that context.

Jaz: Yeah. All right. Can we move on to some other lines?

Lulav: Yeah. So like, here's an interesting line. "Hashem has called you back as a wife forlorn and forsaken. 'Can one cast off the wife of his youth?' said your G-d." And this is another one of those seemingly rhetorical questions where like, maybe the answer is yes?

Jaz: This reminds me, I gotta say, of nothing so much as the Jane Austen characters who go back and forth about, "do you ever really get over your first love interest?" And depending on which novel, sometimes the answer is "No, never, I could never forget you," and sometimes it's, "Yes, of course he can forget her to fall in love with you."

Lulav: And sometimes in the same novel, it's like, "Time to marry Louisa Musgrove, but also, Captain Wentworth is a hottie." We're in the middle of *Persuasion*. Not sure how this is gonna turn out. I have some guesses, but I'm not sure. (*laughs*)

Jaz: Uh-huh.

Lulav: Anyway. The reason I bring up this "can one cast off the wife of his youth" question is, in Ki Teitzei, I summarized this as "don't get back with your exes," but it was specifically, "if a dude marries a woman and then divorces her and then she remarries somebody else and then divorces him, or he dies, the first dude and the woman cannot get remarried, because something something infidelity." Which is to say, one can cast off the wife of one's youth.

Jaz: Yeah, pretty textually.

Lulav: There just needs to be that context.

Jaz: Yeah. Also, it reminds me really vividly, I don't know if I said this on air last time -- (*Lulav laughs*) I suspect not. But when I was breaking up with my first girlfriend --

Lulav: Mm-hmm.

Jaz: We had this whole conversation about how like, maybe someday, we could get back together, just not now, and — that's never happening, we're never doing that, what — you know? Like... *(laughs)*

Lulav: I've been there. *(both laugh)*

Jaz: I don't think that's something either of us would ever want at this point. So... *(laughs)*

Lulav: Yeah. The thing is, when you grow up, a lot of the time, the things you are looking for change, and usually for the better.

Jaz: Yeah.

Lulav: Almost always for the better.

Jaz: Yeah.

Lulav: And like, maybe both of you have changed in a good way? It's unlikely that you'll have changed in good and compatible ways, you know?

Jaz: Right.

Lulav: So, let's see here... I think, if we are trying to take some actual wisdom around the queer reading that we're doing --

Jaz: "Don't get back with your exes" is a good start, though, frankly.

Lulav: Honestly, yeah. *(Jaz laughs)* "Yeah, but what if they're really cute, and like, you're both lesbians now? I don't know..." Don't get back with your exes.

Jaz: Yeah. Yeah! I just. Really! *(Lulav laughs)*

Lulav: If you got back with your ex and it's working out, that is amazing. Send your tales to palmliker on Twitter.

Jaz: Okay, my actual real philosophy about "don't get back with your exes" is like, if there is serious reason to believe that both of you have changed significantly, such that the problems that caused your original breakup *(Lulav laughs)* will no longer be an issue, *and* even with that significant change, are still interested in each other, *(Lulav laughs)* you can consider it, but I think the fact of being still interested in your ex should actually give you pause as to whether you've changed significantly enough —

Lulav: Mm.

Jaz: — so I'm skeptical about it being a good idea, but I think you could consider both of those two things. Both "have you changed enough?" or "have circumstances changed enough?"

Lulav: For example, maybe you initially broke up with your ex because your queer elder friend was like, "Mmm, I don't think she's good for you." And it turns out that she was just being really judgy, and you really like your ex, and shouldn't have broken up with her in the first place.

Jaz: Please rewrite a gay version of *Persuasion*. This is delightful.

Lulav: Hey, not the same thing, but remember how we were talking about *Seen and Not Heard* and Caroline Mincks?

Jaz: Uh-huh.

Lulav: They're working on a queer *Pride and Prejudice*.

Jaz: Also cool.

Lulav: Yeah. Anyway. Boy. Back on topic.

Jaz: You were gonna say something else about "can you cast off the wife of your youth?" though.

Lulav: Yeah, I guess— I can't actually figure out how to say this, because I'm not sure if this is an actually reasonable thing.

Jaz: Just say it!

Lulav: Basically the idea: once you're in diaspora, you're in diaspora?

Jaz: Oooh.

Lulav: Like, what does it mean that Hashem has called you back if you've remarried? What does that remarriage mean, and at what point does that become so much that coming back to Hashem itself is wrong, versus, like, coming back to the specific conception of Hashem that you were dating when you were 20?

Jaz: Ooohh.

Lulav: There are so many threads here, and I cannot fathom them into a tapestry.

Jaz: Can I try? 'Cause I love those pieces you're putting down, and I want to see if I can help.

Lulav: Go ahead. I'd love to hear this.

Jaz: It sounds like you can't ever go back to the wife of your youth because she'll be different. You can't go back in time.

Lulav: Mm-hmm.

Jaz: So you can go back to the person she is now, but it would still have to be a brand new type of relationship.

Lulav: Yeah, it's not going back.

Jaz: Right. And so, the same is true for the Jewish people and G-d. Having once been in diaspora, we can't ever have that not have been the case?

Lulav: Mm-hmm.

Jaz: So the relationship there is fundamentally changed.

Lulav: Mm-hmm.

Jaz: And even as you say, maybe the Jewish people can still have a relationship with G-d, and we still value that relationship, that relationship now has to look different. It's, "how can I love my birth city and the city I live in now?" It's the same as saying, "How can I love my family of origin, and my new family I've created for myself?"

Lulav: Mm-hmm.

Jaz: Or as saying, "We loved the people we were then, at that point in history, and we will never be that people again. In the same way that we have to cut the covenant, as you'd say, in every new generation?"

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: We have to do so in every place, also.

Lulav: Yeah. We are always already cutting the covenant.

Jaz: The Jewish people make our own covenant, such that Ashkenazi Jews have their own differences from Sephardi Jews, who have their own differences from Mizrahi Jews, who have their own differences from Beta Yisrael and Bene Yisrael. That's good and fine and beautiful, and all of those people are Jewish, and holy and in relationship.

Lulav: Mm-hmm.

Jaz: But they're not the same as when they were all clustered in the same place, and they won't be. (*Lulav laughs*) There is a book that I was reading during the school year, because I was using it to teach my students, which is called *The Mosaic of Israel's Traditions*.

Lulav: Haha, get it, Mosaic. (*laughs*)

Jaz: And it's a book that interviewed Jewish children in Israeli schools--

Lulav: Mm-hmm.

Jaz: --about their practices for different Jewish holidays from their communities.

Lulav: Mm.

Jaz: And so there's a bunch of things from Jews whose families were from Poland, Hungary, Yemen, Ethiopia, Persia, Turkey, India, everywhere. The idea being, like, all of those children might go to school together. Still doesn't mean that their history and practices and relationships are all the same. And that is, of course, even setting aside issues of racism and different things, but just even on the most basic level, things will be different.

Lulav: Yeah. And like, wherever you have a thesis and antithesis, there is a synthesis born from it.

Jaz: Mmm.

Lulav: Sorry to get Hegelian. And also, I don't mean it in such adversarial terms as, like, there is a thesis and then something that is in response to that and opposition, but like, you know, if you have Ashkenaz holidays, and are neighbors with or cousins with people who have Mizrahi holidays, like, you have to figure out how you, personally, are going to celebrate those?

Jaz: Right. Like, when my family does a seder, eggs at a Passover seder is something that a lot of people do, but it used to be that my family just made hardboiled eggs--

Lulav: Mm-hmm.

Jaz: --and then one of my mother's friends, who's Sephardi, taught her their family recipe and now she makes Sephardi eggs.

Lulav: Nice.

Jaz: Or — okay, we're American Ashkenazi Jews, and Ashkenazi Jews, on Pesach, typically don't eat kitniyot, which is legumes and certain things like that, that aren't technically chametz, aren't, like, leavened things, but could look like they are?

Lulav: Mm-hmm.

Jaz: So Ashkenazim avoid them. That includes rice and stuff. But basically no other Jewish community does that. And in the US, increasingly, even Ashkenazim don't do it. They are in contact with other Jewish communities more. They know that other communities don't keep that stringency. And a lot of us don't keep that particular stringency. And I think it is fair, at that point, to begin to start saying that by, a sort of American minhag, we don't keep that particular stringency.

Lulav: Mm-hmm.

Jaz: You know, we are a relatively young Jewish community. (*Lulav laughs*) But minhag is a thing that can evolve, and I think it's fair to observe when that seems to be happening.

Lulav: "Minhag" meaning, like, "de facto practices of a Jewish community," right?

Jaz: Yeah. It's like, a word that means basically "custom."

Lulav: Mm-hmm.

Jaz: Like, minhag is, in its own way, also binding, but it is a sort of communal practice that nobody has necessarily exactly decided upon, like, there's not necessarily any one authority responsible for it.

Lulav: Mmm. Okay.

Jaz: It's like, *the* practice that the community does.

Lulav: *(laughs)* Yeah. And, like, speaking of minhag, Samaritans, who are not technically Jews but are like --

Jaz: Cousins.

Lulav: You know, people of Hashem. Samaritans who are trying to be particularly stringent on Pesach won't drink wine, because wine is leavened. It's fermented grape juice, but they will eat kitniyot for sure.

Jaz: That's cool. I didn't know that.

Lulav: So, everybody does different things, and you have to actively make a choice about what you're doing, and I think a lot about how, you know, we're running a podcast, and for us, this is like, conversations between two friends --*and lovers* -- *(Jaz laughs)* But mostly between two friends who are like, you know, crystallizing our backgrounds into things that we can share? But all that you, the listener, are hearing of us is these conversations that we're having, not the conversations that we've had to this point, not the back and forth that we have on our private Twitters, or anything like that. And you're also not in our heads, which is a thing that I, as an autistic woman, have to remember a lot. And so, there are probably people who hear stuff about my practice or stuff about your practice, and they're getting the projection of that one thing that they heard and incorporating that idea into their synthesis.

Jaz: Mmm.

Lulav: And that's just really interesting to me, how, sometimes you don't even need to have a thesis or antithesis, and still, there will be one created to make a new synthesis.

Jaz: Mmm. Beautiful. Can you take us onto the next bit?

Lulav: Yeah. This, to me, is like the waters of Noach — this being that, in anger for a moment, Hashem's face was hidden from us, but, you know, with kindness everlasting, we're gonna be taken back in love. And similarly, with the waters of Noach, everybody was eliminated, but there was a promise made that, "Oh, I gotta remember, you're actually pretty cool, even though you are horrible little creations, and so I gotta take care of you."

Jaz: Yeah.

Lulav: "And not flood the Earth again." *(laughs)*

Jaz: Sure.

Lulav: And... yeah. That's the haftarah, basically, is this Consolation of, it's gonna be okay, you will have a beautiful covenant of friendship, stretching out into eternity.

Jaz: Beautiful.

Lulav: And — I don't know, are there, like, more aspects of the queer futurities that you want to talk about? Like, even beyond, like, how big is the tent and how many tents do you have and what does it mean for someone to own a tent? Do you have metaphorical or non-metaphorical things that you wanna say?

Jaz: Well, there's a thing that they do on the podcast Gender Reveal, where, at the end, the host, Tuck Woodstock, asks guests a question that's like, in your ideal world, what does the future of gender look like? (*Lulav laughs*) And I want to ask you that question.

Lulav: Yeah, okay. So, generally, gender abolition seems pretty great in the sense that, like prescribed roles and proscribed activities and opportunities and resources should be a thing of the past.

Jaz: Okay.

Lulav: I think that, you know, even in ha-olam haba, there's still ways in which people are different from each other affectively and aesthetically?

Jaz: Mm-hmm.

Lulav: But I think that we can have aesthetic differences and not have that rise to the level of gender. A lot of what we do these days, right, as trans joking, is we'll say that our gender is a cracked pinky nail, or something like that. About 60% of our genders of the week are just, like, things from our week, rather than things that we use to identify our genders, you know?

Jaz: Yeah, but on the other hand, punk is a great gender.

Lulav: Right?

Jaz: Librarian is a great gender.

Lulav: Yeah, for sure. I'm just saying, the conflation of just kind of a way you're feeling with gender is a necessary first step towards an abolition of gender as a meaningful differentiation, focusing just on aesthetic differences between people. Does that seem reasonable, or...?

Jaz: Yeah. The way that some languages have grammatical gender, and when there's more than, like, three, linguists stop calling them gender and start calling them noun classes, but they're the same thing.

Lulav: Aaaahh.

Jaz: They're just too scared to say, "this one has nine genders." Or, alternatively, to say that like, ones that are colloquially called genders are just simple noun classes.

Lulav: And another thing! Why do you have to call bees male or female? They're not! They have, like, four or five different sexes, and it's fine.

Jaz: I thought they had three. Queen, impregnator, and worker.

Lulav: Oh, maybe. I don't know that much about bees, but I know that calling them male and female is wrong.

Jaz: *(laughs)* Yes.

Lulav: Anyway. Also, who knows what kind of genders bees have? Maybe they have hivegender.

Jaz: Cute.

Lulav: A lot of what's wrong with societies currently is separation by class, and so, reducing the amount of class dichotomies or polychotomies that you can make, which is to say, making it so that people don't separate from each other based on the classes that they are in, just, in general, makes a better future, and specifically will make a queer future.

Jaz: Hmm. I mostly agree with this, but not 100%.

Lulav: Mm-hmm.

Jaz: In that, I think people like building a sense of identity around things. That building a sense of joint identity with all of the people who live on the planet is, like, too many people for our brains to properly conceive of, and we like smaller units than that.

Lulav: Mm-hmm.

Jaz: And I think we can preserve artifacts of gender, within those aesthetic differences, like, you know, I think there can be value in holding on to that, in the same way that we know weirdness and gayness didn't work the same throughout history and that it is anachronistic

to use our modern terms to refer to them, and also, it's nice and it can be valuable to be like, "Yeah, those people were gay."

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: And so, we can hold both of those things. We'll keep some of gender around, as terms for people to resonate with, in aesthetic formulations, but not beyond that.

Lulav: That latter bit that you were talking about where you can look into the past and people didn't use the same terms or think about things in the same way, but you can be like, "Yeah, they're gay too." I think that's kind of the key to the future that I'm talking about, where your sense of belonging isn't predicated on a sense of literally everybody else not belonging. It's a sense of we belong to this group, and also there are other people that we coexist with.

Jaz: Mmm. The way that Judaism acknowledges that there are other people who aren't Jewish and doesn't say they should all try and be Jewish. We're very contented for them to continue doing their own thing, but also we're happy, personally, about us being Jewish.

Lulav: Yeah. That's a great tie-in. So, can we get around to Rating G-d's Writing, the segment where we establish genders and then mess them all up?

Jaz: Yeah! Okay, Lulav. How many genders would you give this haftarah?

Lulav: Oh! Well, okay, just goin' straight for it.

Jaz: Yeah.

Lulav: Like three?

Jaz: That's not very many.

Lulav: No. But also, it's not terribly deep? This is a pretty straightforward--

Jaz: Could be worse.

Lulav: --Consolation, and like, we're reading into it? We're reading all these different multitudes of meaning, but like, the haftarah itself is mostly just, "Hey. I know we got divorced but I'm gonna remarry you because you didn't marry anybody else in the meantime."

Jaz: Eh.

Lulav: "We gotta make the dwelling bigger." Like, three genders is still more than The Binary, but it's not the multitude that--

Jaz: --we deserve.

Lulav: --we deserve. Yeah. Jaz?

Jaz: Yeah?

Lulav: I'm gonna give you two options here.

Jaz: Oooh.

Lulav: One is: you are getting back together with your ex, this haftarah. Why is that good? Two is: you are not getting back together with your ex, this haftarah. Why is that good?

Jaz: Aww. Well, I don't wanna get back together with any of my exes currently, so I am gonna say that that's good because it means that we are all growing and changing from where we were in the past, and that's good for all of us involved --

Lulav: Mm-hmm.

Jaz: — and this haftarah didn't make any of us go backwards. It, in fact, encouraged us to move forward --

Lulav: Mm-hmm.

Jaz: — and, even if it didn't necessarily encourage us to move forward, it helped us keep to the wise decisions we made at the time.

Lulav: Yeah.

That's great. Jaz, you have a little bit of a Consolation to slap onto this Consolation.

Jaz: I do. So, if you haven't listened to any of our previous episodes with Consolations, just as, near the end of this haftarah cycle, haftarah portions are all promising us good futures and offering us hope for things getting better, we, too, have been bringing things that give us hope for a brighter future.

Lulav: Mm-hmm.

Jaz: As our own personal Consolations. In the past, for mine, I've brought, pretty exclusively, poetry written by other people, and this week I want to offer, broadly speaking, the human capacity for creativity (*Lulav laughs*) and specifically, the human capacity to journal.

Lulav: Oooh.

Jaz: Journaling is a thing that I find a lot of value in. I'm currently writing in a journal that I bought at the Philly Trans Wellness festival, a couple years ago.

Lulav: Heck yeah.

Jaz: It was a festival that I remember pretty fondly. I was there with friends, I made a couple new friends, I had some critiques (*Lulav laughs*) and I bought this teeny little journal from a stand that was offering mental health services to low-income trans people, and my purchase was gonna make them more money to do so. And the journal says on the cover, "My therapist asked me to write this down." (*Lulav laughs*) Which I think is very cute, and I, in general, find journaling a really useful process for working through things that I'm not quite ready to talk about with other people, but that have been weighing on my mind. And I find that the process of writing it down and forcing myself to actually think about it gives me better insight than I would otherwise have, to articulate feelings that I would otherwise find difficult. And, because nobody has to see it, it's okay if I say it badly, or do it wrong, or scribble all over the page, or don't finish my sentences, or--

Lulav: Or aren't as charitable to yourself as you might be in a conversation with somebody else?

Jaz: Or aren't as charitable to other people, crucially, also. (*Lulav laughs*) In ways that I don't have to repeat to them, 'cause I can, like, write it out and then be like, "Okay, that's not fair. What do I also think about that?" (*Lulav laughs*) And I find value in that. The world is full of people who write confessional essays and publish it, and sometimes I want to say to those people, "Hey, did you know that you could journal? Did you know that you could write those things and not have to share it with anybody?"

Lulav: Did you know that you could think about your personal medical transition and not write about it for the New York Times?

Jaz: Right. And I don't say that to people, because that sometimes that often seems like a mean thing to say, but I do sometimes think that we're so used to the confessional essays, and it's worth thinking about: is the value of this for public consumption, or is the value of this: it allowed me to work through things.

Lulav: Mmm.

Jaz: And if the value of it is, it allowed me to work through something, that is valuable all on its own, whether or not anybody else sees it. And sometimes, you know, there are also things where, no, the value of this is, other people might see it and relate to it and realize there are other people like them.

Lulav: Mm-hmm.

Jaz: And that's beautiful too, but I think there's also really gotta be space for, this was valuable to me because it helped me work through my own personal fears and desires and identity and needs and relationships, and it doesn't have to be anything else but that to have value. Your internal work can have value, and it doesn't always have to be shared, and sometimes it's better if it's not shared. It can be messy, and sometimes that messiness can hurt other people, so you have to decide whether it's worth sharing that messiness or not. Sometimes it is, and sometimes it isn't.

Lulav: Yeah.

Jaz: And the other thing about journaling that I really value is, I've journaled fairly regularly since I was 13 years old, which is not quite half of my life but certainly more than half of my life where I was capable of writing, so it's a very good way for me, in some respects, to look back at the person I was, because memory is really fallible and plays tricks on us (*Lulav laughs*) and to be able to look at my 13-year-old self and see — I believed that? I don't remember believing that.

Lulav: Oh, G-d.

Jaz: I wanted that? I don't remember wanting that.

Lulav: I found some essays that I wrote for class in seventh grade and was just like, "Okay, closing this now."

Jaz: But I think — look, we should be gentle with our past selves, because they were young and I don't often think we are as gentle with our past selves as we should be, but I do also think it's fascinating, and can give really good insight, because the journals don't get edited in the meantime, the way we subconsciously edit our selves and our memories.

Lulav: Yeah. That's great. Also, bold of you to bring the human capacity for making poetry, almost?

Jaz: There are a lot of poems in my journals, and occasionally, when they were good, I felt that they had good bones or whatever, I'd type them up and try and do something with them, but usually I didn't because they weren't very good.

Lulav: *(laughs)* That's a mood! Not about your writing, but...I've been there.

Jaz: But journals are for that, you know? Like, they're exploratory spaces. They don't have to be good. Writing that poetry, I'm sure, helped me express an emotion at the time that I needed to express, and you know, I didn't try and publish it. I just-- *(Lulav laughs)* --sat with that emotion and lived like that.

Lulav: Yeah. Thanks for sharing. Jaz, can you take us to the close?

Jaz: I sure can. Thanks for listening to Kosher Queers. If you like what you've heard, you can support us on Patreon at patreon.com/kosherqueers, which will give you bonus content and help us keep making this for you. Also, if you can't commit to ongoing support but would still like to contribute, you can give to our Ko-fi, which is at ko-fi.com/kosherqueers. Find out more information about our podcast, including bios for our team and links to our social media, at kosherqueers.gay. Also, please spread the word about Kosher Queers. Our artwork is by the talented Lior Gross. Our music is courtesy of the fabulous band Brivele, whose work you can find on Bandcamp. Go buy their albums, they're great. Our sound production this week is done by my lovely co-host, Lulav Arnow.

Lulav: Aw, shucks! Many thanks to Jaz Twersky and JJ Jensen, who make sure that every episode gets transcribed. You can find JJ @pantpossum on Twitter, and you can find the link to the transcripts that JJ writes and Jaz proofreads in our episode descriptions at kosherqueers.gay.

Jaz: I'm Jaz Twersky. You cannot find me online unless you want to respond to the Kosher Queers account on Twitter, where I'm happy to answer you. Being on vacation, my understanding is that I am currently on the lands of Muskogee people, who were all over Georgia, where my parents now live. And there's a lot of nods to the Muskogee in ways that show up all over Georgia. So.

Lulav: Mm-hmm. I'm Lulav Arnow, and you can DM me stories of getting back together with your exes so that I can run my messy gay hands all over them and cackle, @palmliker on Twitter. I recorded this audio on the traditional lands of the Wahpékute Dakota. Have a lovely queer Jewish day.

(Brivele outro)

Jaz: This week's gender is: bisexual.

Lulav: This week's pronouns are: they and them.

Jaz: (*crosstalk, off-mic*) I'm not having this conversation again! You know the answer here!