

LOVE PERIOD.

WITH REV. DR.
JACQUI LEWIS

Scripture and Jesus' Radical Teachings with
Rabbi Josh Stanton

Jacqui Lewis : Hey everyone. I'm Jacqui Lewis and I am the host of Love Period, a podcast produced by The Center for Action and Contemplation. This is our fourth season, and in this one we're thinking about how to reframe and reclaim Christian as a religion of love, as the religion of Rabbi Jesus. What about if we took it back to Jesus and took it back to love? What if we take it back to scripture that elucidates this beautiful movement of love and justice? Join us this season for beautiful conversations with folks across the spectrum to talk about what's love got to do with scripture and what scripture's got to do with love.

Today my guest on Love Period is Rabbi Joshua Stanton. He is the rabbi at East End Temple in the East Village, and I've known Josh for many years in our life of activism and protest and collaborating. He's the author of a book called Awakenings and he hosts middle church in East End Temple, a mishkan, a tabernacle for us as we rebuild our congregation's home that burned down in December 2020. We're going to talk today about scripture, about texts, the texts that we have in common as Jews and Christians, and also the command we have in common, the command to love. Josh, you're here.

Joshua Stanton: It is such a blessing to be with you and how wonderful to talk about love with somebody whose office I share, whose mishkan I share, and with whom our community has a deep and growing relationship. It feels like our communities are finding love in a beautiful way.

Jacqui Lewis : That's true, that's true. It's a model, Josh, in a time of human being upheaval all around the globe, sadly much of it to do with religion or religiousness, let's call it, in the name of religiosity, all the hatred and violence and who can't and who can, and who's in and who's out, and the biases that are just causing us to do so much harm to each other's bodies and souls in the name of religion. I'm so glad to have you as a friend and a colleague and our communities a chance to practice what you and I preach.

Joshua Stanton: Amen.

Jacqui Lewis : So Josh, I'm a Christian, albeit a universalist one, who really leans into the Jewishness of Jesus, who I like to call Yeshua Ben Joseph or maybe Yeshua Ben Miriam, I don't know. Mary and Jesus' boy, who is a Jew, right? A Jew from Judea, from Nazareth, from Galilee who was an itinerant rabbi, a tent maker, also a carpenter or a handyman. And I'm fascinated, especially when I stand on your bema preaching in front of the scrolls behind me about the Jewishness of Jesus, just kind of in an open way. When I say the Jewishness of Jesus, what goes on in your body about that?

Joshua Stanton: I feel like Jesus was a brilliant rabbi and a brilliant teacher. And while I do not believe in the corporeal divine nature of Jesus, I look at him as one of the most extraordinary colleagues anyone could possibly imagine. And what he seems to be able to do with stunning clarity is parse all of the complexity of rabbinic thought and midrash and debates and discussions and get to the heart of the matter. And I wanted to, if I may, bring an example from the Torah that I think points to love, but he just goes and says love. And I want to use an example that seems like anything but loving. It's from Leviticus 24 when we say an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, and everyone suggests that that is the basis for corporeal punishment.

In rabbinic thought, it is the basis for restorative justice, because it's very, very clear from the text itself that it is all about monetary compensation to help the other people feel whole and the line that we usually ignore, Leviticus 24:18, one who kills a beast shall make restitution for it, life for life. [foreign language 00:05:00] means literally will make the other person feel whole again. It does not mean that that person will go and kill a beast of yours. It means that if you take away someone else's livelihood, you are responsible to, one, understand what that meant to them. Two, try to conceptualize how you can repay them in fair terms. And three, actually go and do it. It requires such deep empathy and caring. It requires love. You have to love the person you just wronged.

And a lot of people misinterpret this text. They see it as the basis for violence and court sanctioned violence. Under rabbinic law, there is no criminal code. Everything is civil. You can only engage in the realm of compensation. And so we actually derive from this passage the idea that if someone is physically injured you've got to care for them and make sure that they get the best possible medical care. If someone is financially injured, you have to figure out what their needs are. If someone is injured in another way such that they can no longer work, you've got to help them find another way that they can earn a living.

And so what Jesus understood is that without context we are all lost and confused. If you really want to, you can prove any number of things, including the most horrific things, using text, but with careful reading and insight and understanding that at the heart of Torah is love and relationship and a guide to a better life, we can really get to the heart of the matter.

Jacqui Lewis : Ooh, I love that. With careful guidance, with careful reading, and you're talking about also a hermeneutic, right? The lens through which we enter the gate of these beautiful texts. If we enter with, I'm going to say... God forgive, or be happy... it seems to me the intention of G-d, God, Adonai, Allah, God, Yahweh, is we are going to be in community together, me and y'all, you humans, you creatures, this planet, we're going to be in relationship together and you're going to be in relationship with each other. That feels like it's the divine intent. The divine intention is the flourishing of planet and people together.

The story of the Garden of Eden that is in the Genesis text and that wraps, I would say, in the Christian scriptures in the book of Revelation, is this beautiful lush garden of folks and creatures and planet and goodness, and everybody's doing okay. That intention is restoration of that. The divine intention is restoration of that, recovery of that, reparations of that. And if we read scripture through that lens, we're hearing a roadmap. 613, is that correct, my rabbi friend? Codes of how to do this, say something about that.

Joshua Stanton: So one of the interesting pieces, 613 is kind of a footnote in the Talmud. And so there are great disagreements about what are the 613 and what do they add up to and how do we know? But a lot of discussions in rabbinic text say that it adds up to love or it adds up to a life of purpose, or it adds up to community, or it adds up to holiness. And so we don't know what the 613 were, but from the standpoint of Jewish tradition, it's not either law or love, it's that the guidelines of how we should live are an act of love. They are a way of helping us make really difficult decisions, a way of helping us show love to other people and a way of navigating this really complicated world.

So it is both ways. Jesus got to the heart of the matter. The whole purpose of the Torah

is love. That seems like an entirely defensible and wonderful position from the standpoint of rabbinic thought. Jewish tradition gets at it the other way. It's okay, let's take all of these different examples and then let's look at the beautiful picture that they create. Do you see a heart? Do you see a smile? Do you see a rainbow? What do you see? But what's evident is that it is something very positive and something focused on human beings living well and loving well.

Jacqui Lewis : Ooh, that gets an amen. If we were in church, I'd be snapping my fingers. And I think I will, and saying amen to that. In our tradition, Josh, there's a story that the gospel writers tell. It's the rich young ruler or it's a scribe depending on who's telling the story, but the conversation... like you and I would be having... is like what's the most important of these laws that make a heart or a rainbow? What do we do? What's the best way to get this done? And Jesus says, I'm paraphrasing y'all who listen and think she's not quoting, Jesus says, "You know where this is, this is in our scripture. You will love your God with your whole heart, your whole soul, your whole mind, your whole strength. And the second unto it, you will love your neighbor as yourself." So Jesus says love God with everything, love your neighbor as yourself.

Now listen, Josh, this is my favorite little cannon. These are my favorite texts. Love God with everything, love neighbor, love self. Love period, I say, and everything else is commentary. Everything else is midrash. Everything else is exposition. Everything else is here's what it looks like. I'm going to pause there and say, do you have those kinds of cannons for yourself? Do you have your favorite places that guide your life?

Joshua Stanton: Absolutely. So there's something very similar. Someone who is considering conversion to Judaism goes to Rabbi Hillel and asks what Judaism is all about. The famous story of standing on one foot. And Rabbi Hillel gives the articulation that is the closest to the golden rule that we have, but requires actually empathy, compassion, and love. Do not do unto others that which is hateful to you. All the rest is commentary. Go and learn it. Why is it do not do unto others as opposed to a positive framing? Because you actually don't know what other people love. But it's a pretty decent guideline that there is more in common about what causes pain and hurt in the world.

So the starting place when working towards love and towards relationship and towards deeply knowing other people is knowing at least not to cause them pain in any ways that cause you pain. And then the rest of the Torah is to help you develop the characteristics, the qualities, the orientations that you need to actually find love for your fellow human beings. And what I most appreciate is, go and learn it. It's not just go and learn the Torah, it's go practice it. Love is a practice not just something you do once.

Jacqui Lewis : I love that. Love is a practice, it's a spiritual discipline, right? It is a practice. Josh, when I was working on my book, *Fierce Love*, it's so interesting, I was looking in the manuscript the other day and remembering the tabs of the research, talking to Sharon Brous and talking to Linda Sarsour and talking to Brian McLaren and Ruby Sales, revolutionary lovers like you across disciplines. I got really curious about how the world's major religions all have some kind of love neighbor, love self edict, command,

suggestion, hope. In Islam it is don't withhold from someone that which you need for yourself. In Judaism, it's 36, do I have my numbers right, times you shall love the stranger and one time you shall love your neighbor? And in Christianity, we who, hello Christians, claim the Hebrew Bible is ours, that's in our text, and also do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

The Sikh religion, S-I-K-H family y'all, they say Sikh, not Sikh, says don't do anything to break anyone else's heart. Now, that is a pretty high bar. When I was in Israel one time studying with Donnie L. Hartman, he was doing some rabbinic thought in a chavruta kind of moment about the love your neighbor as yourself. And this cracked me up because I'm not a farmer, I'm a city kind of girl. And he's just like, "Here's what the rabbi said, that it means to love your neighbor as yourself. If your neighbor has a cow and that cow wanders into your yard, you will not keep the cow. You will not kill the cow. You will water the cow, feed the cow, you will take care of the cow. You'll rest the cow until your neighbor comes and claims the cow and then you'll return it."

Wow, now let's think about that. You will love your neighbor so much that you feed their cow because that's their livelihood, that's their stuff. What if we loved our neighbors enough to feed our neighbor's elders or give clean water to our neighbor's children or stood up for our neighbor's rights to take care of their own bodies? That rabbinic teaching stays in my brain about what love would look like. If it looks like that for creatures and planet, how much could it look like for humans? Speak about that some, Josh.

Joshua Stanton: Well, I love what you're describing. This is all a set of practices leading us to a life of love, a love for many people. What is so challenging in the example of love your neighbors, it's who are your neighbors? Who counts as a neighbor? Does it have to be someone who owns a property? Can it be a renter? Can it be someone facing homelessness? And do they have to look like you? Do they have to speak the same language as you? Do they have to have the same tradition as you? And I think that is where a lot of our traditions stumble. So what I love is, in terms of caring for the stranger and the orphan and the widow, and the repetition again and again and again is we're not talking about people who look or sound or seem identical to you. The litmus test of love in our traditions is how you treat those with the fewest rights, with the least power, and the least ability to advocate for themselves.

That is the litmus test of love. It's easy to love the people who agree with you all the time. It's easy to love the people who understand you intuitively. It's really hard to go out and love the people who think and feel and approach the world incredibly differently. I don't know if you've experienced this, in my neighborhood during and since pandemic, I've experienced it a lot. My particular block, it feels like the model UN, so we have Nushwa, our amazing neighbor from Yemen who is bringing us over all kinds of food from her Iftar. And we have Ellie who is bringing me a French style cap to look like the Parisian that he is. And we are invited over for Kaffee und Kuchen which is sort of a pre-Christmas hangout with our German neighbors, and everyone from all over the world in all different backgrounds. What they're doing is they're starting by sharing what they love with others.

And then what we're currently working on is figuring out how do people actually feel about that? If I have folks over for Shabbat, is that actually comfortable for them? Is that actually what they want? So it almost feels like level one is obviously don't do what is hateful. Level two is maybe show other people what you love. Level three is venture to get some feedback and make sure it's okay. And then maybe we'll get to a place where we're all giving each other what they need. But the idea that, boom, overnight you just magically go to a place of perfect harmony, that's Messianic, and we're not there yet. And so at the very least, we can start by trying, by assuming good intentions and then by offering loving feedback. Nushwa actually deserves the plot that's in my book, she said, "Look, I observe halal strictly, but I am not strictly kosher. Will you eat food that is prepared in my kitchen?"

And typically my answer would be, "No, thank you so much but no." And Mira, my smarter half and I, we talked to each other and we said, "We're going to say yes to this. She knows that we don't mix milk and meat. She knows certain other things that are specific to kashrut, but this is for the sake of peace and for the sake of love and we're going to accept halal when she brings over food." So all the props to Nushwa for asking. And yes, we should make exceptions even to hard and fast rules when it comes to relationship and peace and love for our neighbors.

Joshua Stanton: Did you experience any of this during pandemic where your neighbors stepped up or stepped out or cared for each other in a unique set of ways?

Jacqui Lewis : Absolutely, absolutely. My closest experience with that is that we shared household with our kids. Joel and Gabby lived with us for three and a half, almost four months. They thought they were coming for two weeks from their apartment in Harlem, and they came to the house we have in Jersey and stayed with us for three and a half months. The baby was three weeks old when they came. And so blending households like that, the two generations, the three generations of us, was the most incredible spiritual gift. They're our closest neighbors, right? I talk in my book about your family's your closest neighbors. How do you love your closest neighbors? I was a little crazy and deserve some special love. I was our resident shopper in the craziness, the high craziness of Covid when we didn't know did the oranges have Covid on the peel? Did the milk carton?

Oh my God, I'd be in the store washing everything with the wipes and putting it in the garage and making a wiping station. I mean, sometimes they were like, "Our nana, the children call me nana, the babies, "she's lost her mind." But we really taught each other a lot about how fierce our love is and also how sometimes the ones you love the most you can hurt just because you don't know what is kosher for them, correct for them, love law for them, doable for them. And you do have to just ask each other questions and step on each other's toes and be apologetic and learn. Make new rituals together is what I'm trying to say. We made beautiful new rituals together. That last piece of wonderfulness that you shared, Josh, made me think about two midrashes, one from Rabbi Yeshua, one from Jesus, and one from Dr. King.

That idea of what does it mean to love your neighbor and who's your neighbor? Who is it? You know that story, the Samaritan... and this story, y'all who are listening, this story gets told in ways sometimes that are antisemitic. Just think about this for just a second, that the stranger is found along the Jericho Road, which is a dangerous road. And there are two

passers by, one is a priest and one's a Levite. And the telling isn't clear about why the priest and the Levite don't go over there so sometimes we're trying to read in did they think that the body was dead and it was going to be unclean on the way to their rituals and blah, blah, blah, blah? And then the story is that this Samaritan, who's a mixed race person, but also you could help me with that some, stops and takes care of the stranger and takes them to a hotel and pays the bill, et cetera.

Jesus is trying to tell a story, I think, about how this one that could have been considered an outsider does the radical love. I don't think there's a commentary about these insiders, if you will, but I think the commentary is about the outsider who does this radical love. And Josh, I don't think I've ever told you, but I had this real experience in Canada where I had a car accident. I tell this story in my book, *Fierce Love*. I had a car accident and I was in the hospital with the man I was loving on. I was in the hospital and they were keeping him and my car was totaled, and I didn't have any money. I was 22 years old and I'm standing at a bank of phones just crying my eyes in Windsor, Ontario, Canada. And this nice white lady walks over to me with my big Afro with the glass in it and the blood on my jacket and just, Josh, loves me.

She sees me crying, she takes me to get food. She does take me to a hotel. She pays the bill. She picks me up the next morning, she takes me to get a rental car. She loans me money. It was insane how much she loved me across the borders, across the boundaries. It was really beautiful. Recently, I was rereading Dr. King's *Strength to Love* and how he talks about the power of forgiveness. That this kind of crazy love that we're called to isn't, as you say, about the people who look like us. It's about the ones who don't, and it's about the ones we don't like. He says, "Isn't it great that we're not commanded to like our enemies, we're commanded to love our enemies." I wonder if you and I could think together about in this big time of enmity, Josh, this crazy time of enmity everywhere on the globe, Israel, Palestine, Texas, Florida, New York, Missouri, I mean everywhere.

In the social media, the nastiness, the political square in the House of Representatives, in the Supreme Court, where our enmity, our disagreements have us so breaking each other's souls... despite Beyonce's *You Won't Break My Soul* song... breaking each other's souls. What's love got to do with that, Josh? What do we, we who do midrash on the midrash on the midrash, what do we think about that?

Joshua Stanton: So once in a while after I can get over my own anger and grief and sense of brokenness, I wonder if people are hurting each other out of actually a sense of love and loyalty to their own. And a feeling that somehow in hurting others, they're showing unconditional love to the people they are closest to, be it religious community, be it political community, be it racial or ethnic community... when you look at the defensiveness of a lot of white folks in the US... be it geographic community, and I see this happening a lot. You look at Israel right now, and I'm one of the many who is just appalled at the self-inflicted wounds to democracy. It's not easy to be a democracy in the Middle East. There's a reason there's only one. And the idea that my co-religionists, at least some of them, would try to dismantle the democracy piece by piece is heartbreaking.

And one wonders who they think they're protecting and how and why. And they're not protecting it, by the way, from presumed enemies of different religions and of different

countries. They're trying to protect a place they call Israel from fellow Jews, and it is secular versus religious. It is Ashkenazi versus Mizrahi. We have to remember the majority of Israeli Jews are of Arab ancestry. So when we think of Middle East conflict it's to a large extent Arab versus Arab. But these are wounds that Jews are inflicting on each other. I want to relate, there's a holiday called Tisha B'Av, it is one of the mournful holidays in our tradition that acknowledges and commemorates the destruction of both temples in Jerusalem. Some have also ascribed to it the launch of the Inquisition happening on that date and the planning of the final solution and all sorts of horrific things that have happened in our history.

But our rabbinic sages submit that the temples were destroyed because of [foreign language 00:28:32], senseless hatred that Jews had for each other. And so one of the really difficult pieces that we need to talk about is not just love that we can have for our own families, but the presence of hate. When we start subdividing our families and to smaller and smaller groupings, when we start subdividing identities into smaller and smaller and less nuanced groupings, we are faced with impossible choices in which our sense of love and loyalty for our little micro community is used as pretense to hate others. The interesting thing, one of the antidotes to senseless hatred is seen in our tradition as... it's not senseless love, but love beyond reason or rationale, that breaking all bounds and showing love is tremendous. There is an area in which we're seeing this in Israel right now and that's in first responders, many of whom are Arab, many of whom are ultra orthodox, many of whom are Mizrahi, meaning Arab Jewish essentially in ethnic heritage as well as religious heritage.

And first responders don't wait and ask you what your background is. They go and they save the life. And so there are these extraordinary stories going viral all over social media of Arab Muslims saving the life of orthodox Jews, delivering babies, caring in such incredible ways. And it points to other realities that a disproportionate number of medical staff in Israel are Arab Muslim or Arab Christian, and that's itself complicated and beautiful and wonderful, but it means that at least we can start with the very basics. We're here to save each other's lives. And from there, once we show that there is unconditional love in the most extreme of circumstances, maybe we can build deeper love in the day-to-day.

Jacqui Lewis : I co-sign that so much, Josh, and would maybe amplify it this way. That place where we are animals is base of brain survival. My folks, my thing, my idea, my people, my tribe. I just am always thinking about writing about what happens when we increase our tribe. So you're talking about that sort of slicing, dicing, slicing, dicing to where we're down here as opposed to human, or as opposed to people who live in Israel or people who live in the United States, or people who have been wounded. Think of all the ways that we could say actually, you're mine. Actually, we are each other. Actually, you're mine. I remember a long, long time ago, and I'm just using this as an example because I've been breathing about the West End lately. The West End is my favorite show, and I wish Martin Sheen could really be the president, but that's another podcast for another time.

But right after 9/11 they did this really beautiful episode about Ishmael and Isaac and it was just beautiful. And of course it was TV simple but it was beautiful. The sense that we are each other's people, that they are each other's people. And in fact, Josh, you and I are each other's people. If we do any genetic testing, we find out that a common fruit fly has more genetic variants than you and I, an Ashkenazi Jewish man who's younger than me and an African American woman who's older than you. We just do. And so what I dream about is that our love would be so ridiculous, so senseless, so insensible, so unbounded that we would really come to understand that ubuntu thing where a person is a person through other people, and it isn't a South African person as a person through other people, or a Xhosa speaking person as a person through other people. Nelson Mandela came to understand that he was inextricably connected even to his captors on Robben Island.

Dr. King wrote, "We are bound together in a garment of destiny. We can't be fully who we are until the other is as well." He writes that from a Birmingham jail. He writes that having been arrested and beaten down, having his house bombed. He is inextricably connected even to the white KKK or the council person. I dream a world where love is our scripture, where love is our calling, where love is our commandment that causes us to own the destiny of the other, that we will not thwart each other's religious practices, that we will not wound each other about our gender identity and sexuality, that we will allow each other flourishing on the planet because we're human together. That's what I'm dreaming. What are you dreaming?

Joshua Stanton: I've got to tell you, I'm not even dreaming that big. I'm working on myself. I want to relate a story, if I may, from this Sunday where I struggled with love. So I was on the Upper West Side heading to a funeral at which I was going to officiate, and I get out of the subway and someone immediately walks up to me and she says, "I'm in recovery. I just spoke to my sponsor and he says I need to get food now because otherwise I'm going to go and it's going to be bad." And I said, "Okay, great. You want to get food? Let's go get food." So we go to a store on the corner and I said, "Get whatever." And a part of me, I think the narcissistic part of me, the limited part of me, the self-interested part of me is like, "All right, this person will get a couple of things. Happy to spend 10 bucks, 20 bucks."

This person orders a lot of stuff, and we go to the cash register and it's like \$70, and I can feel the grumblings. I can feel the other stuff. It's all food. I mean, it's not like this person bought a bunch of alcohol, it's food. I pay for it, I'm grumbling, I'm walking out and I'm thinking to myself, "That person took advantage of me," blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And then I'm like, "Hey, I'm going to be able to pay off this \$70 credit card bill. How stupidly lucky am I?" I can walk away from this interaction. This person was probably getting as much food as they could because they did not know when next they could have it. But I found myself in a place of self-importance. I'm going to go officiate at the funeral. Why are my needs not spoken for?

Again, I bought them the stuff, but I did it with such, I don't know, I was filled with begrudging sentiments and complaint and whiny-ness and a sense of real limitation to my own love. And so I wanted to ask you as a friend, a colleague, a mentor, how do we push the bounds of the love we're willing to give without sort of totally expending the energy we have inside? Because I would've loved to just pay and say, "Have a great day." And instead, I paid and I said, "Okay, I've got to go," and I sort of walked out. I didn't do the dignity piece and sort of grumbled to myself about helping somebody who obviously needed help. There was not love in my heart, would be the nice way to put it. How do I do better? How do we do better? How do we push the boundaries so that we do loving things, feel love about it and don't start resenting each other out of the love that we show?

Jacqui Lewis : Well, that's everything. We talk about writing a book together, let's write that one. That's the whole ball game right there. And I honestly think, Josh, that there has to be both pieces to that love neighbor/love self for us, that the reduction of resentment is also to have a pattern of loving ourselves. I'm not really saying right there, make sure you get a pedicure... although I finally did yesterday after two months... I'm not saying that. I really mean though to value ourselves as part of the equation, as part of the dynamic so that there's a feeling of more transformation as opposed to transaction. How does this moment help me love me too? That kind of a feeling of what's love got to do with this for me? So I had a chance even to feel begrudging feelings. I learned something right there about that. I got to practice how that felt inside myself and I get to say tomorrow I would do that differently or better.

"Guess what," I might say, "I can buy you food but I've got a \$20 boundary. Let's go," because you do get to do that. You would do that with your beautiful son. You would do that even with your

amazing Mira. We set boundaries with the people we love in loving ways. And so if the stranger is a love partner, if the stranger's our kin, we also get to say, "Okay, stranger, actually I was in line for that taxi. Do you mind? I really need to go." So you don't want to punch them, you just articulate it. Or you say, "I only have \$20." Or you say, "Wow, that really surprised me that you spent \$70, but I'd like you to have a good day anyway." Why can't the truth be part of our love language and therefore we're not harboring resentments and killing each other.

We're just kind of as the day goes on airing out some of the truth and we get to love ourselves and love them at the same time because the love language includes candor and includes boundaries. I'm saying that to you thinking did I do that yesterday? I don't know. But I found myself more and more the older I get wanting very much for the love I feel for the other to flow out of God's love for me and my love for myself. So it's not expending, it's growing, it's not costing, it's gaining, it's not resenting, it's practicing, just like different verbs that help me to think I'm on a journey to love me and them and the world. Let's see how it goes today. I'm shrugging my shoulders as I say that y'all. I think that's right.

Joshua Stanton: It makes so much sense to me. Maybe what we're pointing to is the idea I love boundaries being an important part of love. I love the idea that there are multiple people to whom we need to show love at any given moment including ourselves. I love the idea that this is practice. There's no final product when it comes to love. It is ongoing until our very last breath. And I guess part of love is loving the grumpy part of me that was really surprised and unhappy about giving more than I was prepared to. It's sort of you've got to even love the Eeyore within. You've got to even love the parts of you that are not perfect and not refined and not where you want them to be.

Jacqui Lewis : I think that's so right, my friend. That my granddaughter laughs when I say the words prickly bits. I think we have to love our prickly bits and the practice that we're doing, the rehearsal we're doing when we love the yucky, not so refined, not so beautiful grumpiness in ourself, is we're also practicing how to love that in the other. And you and I both know that often the thing that torques us out the most about the other is because of how much it's like us. So why not just have a whole, I'm going to say theater, just because I'm feeling that today. Why not have a whole theater, not a theater of war but a theater of love, a theater of love where today I'm cast as the practicing one and yesterday I felt like I was the little boy who got taken advantage of and that's why I was grumpy.

Or tomorrow I'm going to be so broken, disappointed, about the fact that I can't call my mom that I might be cranky. Just be gentle with ourselves and therefore also be gentle with each other. Try not to do anything to break anyone's heart, not even our own, not even our own. Josh, I feel like we could talk for hours. I want to wrap with maybe just a little reminder to people of why I am talking to my rabbi friend about scripture and about love. I want to remind you, friends, when you hear this podcast soon or in 10 years from now, that you who say you're Christian, are following in the way of someone who was not a Christian. Someone who wasn't trying to start a new religion, someone who was a teacher, a rabbi with students, someone trying to make meaning of his life and his texts.

You have heard it said, but I say, Josh and I do that every weekend in our communities. You have heard it said, but I say, here's what I think, here's what the spirit is whispering in my

ear. So please, my loves, do not ever be antisemitic in the name of the one in whose way we follow. That's not acceptable. Please don't ever be funky, evil, mean, stank to the outsider in the name of the one we follow, who made friends with the outsiders, the ostracized, the unwell, the unacceptable, the ones who were not in the middle because in fact he wasn't in the middle. So I'm so happy to talk to my Jewish brother about the Jewish brother who's our mentor and the texts we have in common and what's love got to do with it. Josh, I would love for you to give us a blessing as we wrap today.

Joshua Stanton: [foreign language 00:43:49]. May the God who loves the Jewish people also share that love with people around the world, with people who are similar to us and people who are totally different, with people who look like us and sound like us and people who do not, with people who fill our own hearts with love and even people who break our hearts. May the God who loves us all give us peace. Amen.

Jacqui Lewis : Amen. Thank you, Josh. I love you.

Joshua Stanton: Love you too. Thank you so much.

Jacqui Lewis : Thank you so much for listening to this episode of Love Period today. I enjoyed my conversation with Rabbi Josh and I hope you did as well. One of the things I want you to think about as you leave this moment is literally the Tina Turner question. What's love got to do with it? When I was writing *Fierce Love*, I had conversations with faith leaders across denominations, across traditions, and one of the things that is a constant is the way our faith, our faiths, call us to love neighbor and love self. I'm convinced that much of what wounds the world is we don't love ourselves and therefore we carve out little pieces of humanity to kind of love hard on, and we decide it's okay to not love the others, to hate the others, to violate the others. They're not us, we say to ourselves, and we're going to stick with our own kind.

Can you feel my West Side Story right there? The truth is, fierce love's edict, if you will, is for us to see the other, even the enemy, as part of our kin, part of the human family to increase, I say in my book *Fierce Love*, to increase the ones we call family, to reduce our tribe and increase the ones that we call family, to see their kids as ours, their elders as ours. They're thriving as ours, to understand that we are inextricably connected to their destiny. When we love ourselves enough to know that we deserve to flourish we'll also come to understand how much our neighbor deserves to flourish, and we'll make their flourishing our project. That's what fierce love calls for. That's not easy. In fact, it's hard, but I'm clear it's the only way our species will survive. The only way is to stand up for all of us at the same time. Can you love you enough to know your flourishing is the divine intention? And can you look across the street, across the way, and see your neighbor and think, yep, they deserve to flourish too. We'll talk more soon.