

LOVE PERIOD.

WITH REV. DR.
JACQUI LEWIS

On Repentance and Repair
with Rabbi Danya Ruttenberg

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's Scripture got to do with love>?

Today my guest is Rabbi Danya Rutenberg. She's one of my favorite rabbis. I enjoy engaging with her on all things social issues. Her pulpit is at the National Council of Jewish Women where she is working on ways to stand up for women and their choices in the world. When I think about Midrash, when I think about teaching on justice, on humanity, and rights that belong to all of us, Danya is one of the rabbis I call, one of the ones I consult with. So I think you're going to enjoy our conversation today.

Thank you, Danya, for coming today.

Rabbi Danya: Thank you for having me, honor and a delight to get to hang out with you again.

Jacqui Lewis: I know. How about next time though, in person?

Rabbi Danya: Yes, please.

Jacqui Lewis: Something liquid, tea, coffee, whatever we think.

Rabbi Danya: One of the beverages, something.

Jacqui Lewis: Yes. Adult beverages, right? Can you just tell me how you are? There's a lot happening as we record this in the world of women's rights, and abortion craziness, and gun madness, and climate hazard. Holy cow.

Rabbi Danya: Yes.

Jacqui Lewis: Tell me how you're doing.

Rabbi Danya: I'm holding on. There's so much work and National Council of Jewish Women focuses on changing systems for women, children, and families, and it's been a long haul, in terms of abortion justice. And we've been doing a lot of work on the care economy, right, on basic things like making sure that people have family leave, and that people are paid justly, and equal pay, and all of that, sick leave, and then gun violence. The right to have the children you want and to not have the children you don't want also means that, when you have kids, that they are going to be safe in all of the ways. You can send them to school and that they will be safe. That when they are in the car, if they're stopped by police, that they will be safe. So there's a lot of work to do. And I'm just trying to do my little tiny piece of the puzzle.

Jacqui Lewis: You're doing great work. Not a tiny piece, a big chunk. But let me just ask you, Danya, let's just jump in. I'm looking at your sign intersectional feminism, these issues of reproductive

justice, children having enough food on the table, able to go to school, and I don't know, learn some truth, able to sit in a classroom without worrying about being killed, that gun violence is the leading cause of death for America's children. You're smart as Heaven, can you give us a bit of an analysis of what is at the core, the root of these intersectional concerns? What do you think, what in the hell is going on?

Rabbi Danya: Why is our country so determined not to take care of its own?

Jacqui Lewis: That is exactly what I'm talking about. Why?

Rabbi Danya: White supremacist patriarchal capitalism?

Jacqui Lewis: Yes. White supremacist, patriarchal capitalism.

Rabbi Danya: Right, we live in a country that has, at its root, systems of domination and oppression. And it is in the best interest of a very small number of people with significant power to maintain the status quo. And the cost of human lives does not move them.

And it's that famous quote, the gunning down of children, and as some of my Black colleagues have observed, the wealthy White children from Connecticut, even, is not enough to move those in power to pass appropriate gun control with Sandy Hook. If that was not enough to move our country, then what will? I feel like I don't even need to spell out the rest of that sentence, I would hope.

So then the question is, then what? And the answer is, then it's on everyone else. And there are more of us. There are more of us to come together and to say, no, and to recognize that all these issues are intertwined.

Abortion justice is a racial justice issue. Economic justice is a gender justice issue, right? Immigration justice is a trans justice issue. They're all intertwined. They are all one thing. And the more we can come together and treat them all as one, the easier it will be to move the needle.

Jacqui Lewis: I was with nearby star a few weeks ago doing some work, it feels like a few weeks ago. It might have been a couple months ago, but it feels like a few weeks ago. And one of the things that she was talking about that I'm often saying is Tikkun Olam, to heal the world, Tikkun Olam. She explained that to me in a way that I hadn't heard before about, I'm going to say light in a vessel and the vessel exploding. Could you tell us about the healing of the world stuff story, beautiful, the imagery is so beautiful.

Rabbi Danya: It's interesting because in the contemporary language, we hear Tikkun Olam, which literally translates as, fixing the world. And we think, like, "Great, doing social justice."

And it's become that shorthand. In rabbinics, it actually means, it's a concession to reality. The rabbis would say, "Listen, ideally we would do it this way, but we know how people are. And so, Tikkun Olam because of how it's going to be. We'll just do it this way because that way, we know things will actually happen." And so, it was their attempt to try to get things to work.

And then Isaac Luria in the 16th century, in Safed the Land of Israel, he was a Kabbalist. He took earlier Kabbalistic thinking and basically had this idea that when the world was created, I need to go back. And then there's the theological problem. How does the great infinite perfection create a world that is material and finite and imperfect, right? It is a great theological question.

And for Luria, it was like the great Divine Holiness became so great. And so this explosion of big goodness and a shattering of the vessels of perfection. And these sparks of light moved out into the world. And the created world is these shattered vessels. And it's our job to find these Holy Sparks that are everywhere in everything. They are in how we eat, how we drink, in every act, in every way of being, and to lift them up in what we do, and how we do what, we can lift up these Holy Sparks and return them to the Divine.

And that this is the Tikkun Olam, this is the repairing. And in bringing things back to unity. There are a lot of theologies in Judaism, so this is not the only one. And there's something very powerful about this idea of, even in the most broken places, in the most shattered shards of our country, our world, the places where there's the most pain, we can still say, "We are going to lift up the Holy Spark here. We're going to find that goodness, that hope, that possibility, and we are going to send it up because we refuse to sit and despair and we refuse to let evil win.

Jacqui Lewis: And it's part of our calling, right? It's part of our job.

Rabbi Danya: That's our job, yeah. Oh, yeah. For the Kabbalists, this is what we do.

Jacqui Lewis: Yeah, I love that. I love that. I love Holy Sparks. I was in my mind going shards of light, but Holy Spark is really great. Danya, you know your work on reparations, On Repentance and Repair, is your beautiful book, Making Amends in an Unapologetic World. Whoo. Making Amends in an Unapologetic World. This idea of Tikkun Olam, of healing the world, of lifting up the Holy Sparks, when the world is on fire and a hotness, where do you see it happening? Where do you see signs of people going, "Yeah, I got this?"

Rabbi Danya: There is amazing healing work happening in a lot of places. You have to look for it, right? Because the work of asking power to take responsibility for the harm it has caused and to do transformation work, so that it will not cause that harm anymore, and to be accountable to those who it is harmed. This is big. And this is paradigm-changing. And that's part of the reason why it is so difficult to move our country, right? Because if we do this work for real, it will change systems and structures, it should, necessarily.

But there are places where it's happening, right, whether it's on the institutional level. One of my favorite examples is the University of Michigan Health Center transformed how it handles patient malpractice, right? Now, somebody is hurt in the course of getting care and they go straight to them to their bedside. They say, "This happened, we take full responsibility. Here is what we're going to do for amends. Is this appropriate for you? Here's what we're going to make sure this doesn't happen

again.”

And then the next person who comes through their doors is safer because of it. And people get their needs met. And you see it reflected in the malpractice lawsuit data or whatever, they feel they're getting taken care of. And you see it in the LandBack Movement, which is gaining momentum, as more people are saying, “This land is not ours. We stole it.”

And there are local tribal nations for whom it is truly theirs, and they are the true caretakers. And we will either do fundraising through a local nonprofit, or we will work with the local government, or whatever. We will find ways to get tracks of land back to its original owners. And that is profoundly taking responsibility for the harm caused, making amends, making sure that a different future is possible, right?

Jacqui Lewis: Mm-hmm. That's right. That's exactly right. Yeah. Forty acres and a mule would've been, that didn't happen.

Rabbi Danya: Would've been, right.

Jacqui Lewis: Would've been, could have been. Do you know Edgar Villanueva work? Decolonizing Wealth?

Rabbi Danya: I know of it. I haven't had a chance to read it yet.

Jacqui Lewis: I do feel like there's some energy around reparations that I would say I didn't know was happening, lots of different corners. There are some people working in Tulsa, for example, on how do we make amends for that horrible massacre? And those elders who actually didn't win their case. Northwestern University, like in Evanston, there's some energy happening. Here in New York, there's a law that's cooking that will be passed or not passed later in the fall. And then the crazy quote, Columbus Day/ Indigenous People's Day is coming right on the tail end of the high Holy Days that are your people, they were my people's Holy Days.

Danya, what are the rituals? What are the conversations? What are the processes for repairing, making reparations? Some book practical ideas that are in your book, but also just in your experience, in the work you do. How do we think about making reparations? And this is a complex question I'm trying to get out here. What are the texts that inform your thinking?

Rabbi Danya: In *On Repentance and Repair*, which is coming out in paperback in mid-September, really, my work is based on Maimonides, who is a 12th century philosopher, a scholar, Torah scholar. He was the physician to Sultan Saladin in Egypt, workaholic, whatever, he took earlier thinking from rabbinic Judaism and rearranged it so that it would be easier for your everyday person who is not a Talmud Scholar to know what to do and when to do it. And he was a very confident person, who decided for himself in some places. If the Talmud hadn't made it clear what the answer was, he decided.

Jacqui Lewis: Yeah, all right,

Rabbi Danya: God, give me the confidence of, I am not Maimonides, right? But he's a very confident man.

One of the things that Maimonides did was codify the Laws of Repentance. He took earlier rabbinic thinking and arranged it in a new way. And as I read it, there are, according to Maimonides, Five Stages of Teshuva, of the Repentance Process, which for us, Teshuva is not, "Repent, bad monkey, feel sorry, feel guilty."

But rather, Teshuva, it means return. It's about coming back to where you were supposed to be all along before you caused harm. It's about coming back to yourself, to God, right? And the Five Steps, as I read them, are: confession, own the harm that you caused fully, no hedging, no, but I'm really a nice guy; start to change on the individual level, is that therapy, is that calling your sponsor, is that ditching your friends that make you encourage you to make bad choices, is that educating yourself on anti-racism or trans liberation, right? If you're an institution, are you changing your policies so that you can't bury complaints anymore? What needs to change so that you don't do the thing anymore, right, is Step Two.

Then, Amends. Then Apology, because we want to see you do the work. We want to see the change and the repair first, before we hear any words.

And then, Step Five is, you don't do the thing ever again. And If we're talking about reparations, and we know that if you don't do the work, you're going to do the thing again and again, right? If you are acting out of trauma, you're going to keep playing out your anger in new situations, if you haven't started to change, right? If your fear of abandonment is replicating itself in relationships, that will keep happening if you don't do the work right? If you don't do the deep anti-racism journey, your White supremacy is going to, speaking as a less-melanated person inculcated in this culture, there's always more work to do. But if you don't do any of it, it is going to keep showing up.

And so when we look at the United States, of course, the White supremacy has continued from enslavement to lynching, to Jim Crow, to redlining, to mass incarceration, to voter suppression. We keep doing the thing. And so when we talk about reparations, I see us going straight to amends, to Step Three, without owning fully the harm that has been caused and without the changes necessary to make sure it doesn't happen again.

Jacqui Lewis: Why is that dangerous? I know, but I want you to say.

Rabbi Danya: Because if what we do is offer financial remuneration to the descendants of those who have been enslaved, without changing our White supremacist systems and institutions, then we are going to continue to live in a White supremacist country. And racial injustice is going to continue to replicate itself in probably, new, and innovative, and dangerous ways, in ways, probably, we can't even think about from here. Thank you, technology.

And if we're talking about wealth inequality, there's maybe some movement, but it won't be enough to repair. It won't be repair.

Clearly, I am not the person to be weighing in on what is correct reparations, right? And as somebody who has spent a lot of time thinking about repair, I am worried when I see proposals that are just about, on the one hand, in a country where we can't even talk about slavery in some states, the fact that we're talking about reparations in others is important.

And I don't want to short circuit that, right? And in the other, I want to make sure that any conversation about reparations is rigorous in its conversations about unseating White supremacy from our systems and institutions.

Jacqui Lewis: That's right. That's right. And then the conversations I'm in Danya about reparations there's also, I think that you're saying this too, there's, in that learning, in that Step Two of changing, there's something about knowing what feels like repair to the other person. What is repair for them? Not repair in our own language, what's their love language? What's their repair language? What is the repair language that makes reparations possible? Because we know what it is, right?

Rabbi Danya: Correct. If I am a harm-doer and whether we're talking about the individual case, whether I'm the CEO, and I'm dealing with someone in my organization who has been, I don't know, sexually harassed by a donor, whatever the thing is, where the institution caused harm, I'm the head of the Catholic Church, the head of the Boy Scouts, the head of many denominations, of many organizations, including in Judaism, and I am trying to figure out how to repair harm, whether it's on the national level. If I am a harm-doer and I come to the harmed party and I say, "Here are your amends," without asking the harmed party, "What do you need?," I am replicating the original harm because I'm treating them like an object. I've decided for them what they need. I'm not seeing them as a subject.

And half the time, at least, if not more, if you ask the victims or victim-survivor, or survivor what they need, the answer's probably different than whatever the harm-doer's going to assume. And that is often an important learning moment for the harm-doer. If the survivor says, "Actually, I don't need you to pay my medical bill. I've got great health insurance. Actually, what I need is for you to blah, blah, blah.:"

And the harm-doer's going, "Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh."

We have learned something. It's got to be victim-centric. And so we have to meet the needs of the victim, which means we need to ask them what those needs are.

Jacqui Lewis: Which requires some vulnerability and some intimacy, which is why I think people want to skip that part. Because then you have to actually look at somebody and be like, "Yeah, there's wounds that I caused in you. There's harm I've done to you."

Now talk to me about that.

Rabbi Danya: Yeah, and there's a loss of control. I don't get to either control the narrative, or control what you are going to need from me, and what you might need from me might be inconvenient to me.

Jacqui Lewis: I am going to say this and I want you to push me all the way back. If I get this wrong, just push, give me a nice, gentle pushback, okay?

Rabbi Danya: Bring it.

Jacqui Lewis: I'm thinking about some conversations I have where it's, even Germany, type of thing, right? Even Germany has done a reparations campaign about the Shoah, about the Holocaust,

about the harm done to Jewish folk. How do you feel about that Germany thing? Where does that sit? Is that Germany thing a good model or where is that for you?

Rabbi Danya: Germany is a messy model, honestly. When I started writing on repentance, I was assuming that Germany was going to be the model case from which we can all learn as one of my case studies to help us figure out what to do in the US. And it was very messy because the money to Jews came right after World War II, before the country had been willing to admit what they had done. It was basically, “Here’s some money. Let us back into polite society.”

The government was, at that point, still completely riddled with Nazis. And then it took them a generation to even start to talk about what had happened. But then it was still students saying, “You guys,” instead of coming home and asking grandpa where he was during the war.

Jacqui Lewis: Right, right.

Rabbi Danya: And then it wasn’t until the 80s, 90s that people started to really have this grassroots activism and really saying, “Okay, in this town, here’s the memorial to where we had a mass shooting, and here’s where this, and the mayor actually did this,” right?

And to be able to really name, more concretely, do the Confession Step, really. And it was like ‘85 before a head of state spoke in a deep way about what had happened in a way that felt like it was having taken any responsibility.

So now, in many ways, Germany is a country that is deeply different in its attitude towards immigration, and its education around the Holocaust, and all of that is profound. Obviously, fascism is on the rise there as everywhere, worldwide. So, never again, eh?

But they have done a lot of really good work, but they did it all out of order. So could they have done it in order? Would that have been possible in a country that was feeling victimized? Everybody’s been mean, and bombed us, and I don’t know.

And the other thing about Germany that we have to remember when we think about models for owning harm, that is different from the United States, and it’s different from South Africa, is that when Germany was taking responsibility, they were dealing with a population that was all either dead or elsewhere. When the United States and South Africa think about harm, the implications require a radical restructuring of power in our society.

Jacqui Lewis: Yes, that’s really important.

Rabbi Danya: And it is harder and more important.

Jacqui Lewis: That’s spot on. So I’m want to flip all the way into another place, which is, one of the ways that you are my rabbi is around reproductive justice, just only one of the ways. And when I get a chance to be like, “And then Danya said,” I just do it.

Because listen, my Christian people like to take your book and pretend like they know what it’s saying or it’s not relevant. There’s two things there. And this Jesus that’s created in folks’ own image, this White supremacist Jesus who’s blonde, blue-eyed, and wants us to be rich with peacenik sign, that Jesus, they will put into his mouth thoughts about abortion that are not in his mouth or from his people. And you live right in the middle of this.

So when we talk about texts, Danya, this year, we’re trying to really reflect on, we claim faith, we

claim text. Could you just take us on a journey about why Judaism isn't, why abortion is just poorly in the mouth of the Christians who don't know? I want to say, "Call a rabbi. Reproductive freedom is a Jewish value."

Do not sit in your pulpit trying to tell people how to feel about abortion if you're not going to call a rabbi in the name of Jesus who was a Jew.

So with that preface, take us to school, a little bit, on reproductive justice, okay?

Rabbi Danya: Let us do this thing. And I will say that as part of National Council of Jewish Women, we have a Rabbis For Repro Network that has over 2,500 rabbis, and cantors, and other Jewish clergy, Maharat, and people with other Jewish clergy titles of every denomination, heads of orthodox yeshivas, and I write the whole gamut, heads of every denomination, because there's not really a lot of question in the tradition. There's really not wiggle room.

Here's the thing. In the book of Exodus, we have a case where a pregnant woman is accidentally knocked over when two guys are brawling. And it says quite clearly, basically, if there's a miscarriage, then the guy who knocked the pregnant woman over, and we know now that people of various genders can get pregnant and need access to abortion care, and miscarriage care, and prenatal care, and all of those things. But the language is one.

So if she has a miscarriage, basically only, then he needs to pay the husband however much money the husband specifies. And if other harm happens, then it is *ayin ta'ala'ayin*, *shinna'yim ta'ala' shinna'yim*, right? Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, wound for wound, bruise for bruise, et cetera, et cetera.

So basically, if it's just a miscarriage, you pay money. And if she dies, then it's treated as manslaughter. So, causing a miscarriage is not manslaughter, the fetus does not have the same status as a person. The fetus does not have the full status of rights of personhood. And that's in this, just a couple of verses, little bitty Exodus texts.

The Talmud reads it very clearly as that. The Talmud also says that for the first 40 days, a fetus is *maya b'alma*, mere water. And 40 days from conception, so for our counting from last menstrual period, that's seven to eight weeks pregnancy, 66% of abortions happened within that time. And then from 40 days until birth, the fetus is considered part of the pregnant person's body. It's as though it is the mother's thigh, is the language used.

Jacqui Lewis: I love that, the mother's thigh.

Rabbi Danya: Right? It's just a body part.

Jacqui Lewis: Part of the body.

Rabbi Danya: And then we have other texts that the Mishnah, which is a 2,000, or more depending on your theology, year-old text, says really explicitly, if a woman is in labor and the greater part of the baby/fetus has not emerged, then you have to do whatever you need to do. And it's very graphic, basically abort the baby/fetus to save the life of the pregnant person, because her life takes precedence, right?

Until that baby's head, which is how later commentators read it, until the head has emerged into the world, it is not considered to have the full rights of personhood. Because that Genesis II, Jews are terrible at chapter and verse because that's not our thing. But, God breathed life into the nostrils of Adam. That first breath is where life begins for us. It's not to say that a fetus doesn't matter, right? It's

a potential life, and it's important, and it's holy, right? It's not nothing. This is not to say, and as someone who has three children, who has had a miscarriage, right, it's not to diminish, for those of you listening, but abortion is permitted in Judaism. And in order to save or preserve the life or health of a pregnant person, it is required.

Jacqui Lewis: Required.

Rabbi Danya: Because the health, and life, and safety of the pregnant person takes precedence. And that includes mental health.

Jacqui Lewis: Yeah.

Rabbi Danya: And the number of cases that our country bans, that Judaism would say, actually, "You're required to have an abortion," are many right now.

Jacqui Lewis: Thirteen-year-old baby girl forced to give birth because somebody, someplace has decided that abortion is the issue with which to whip up the nation. And those same people, not to quote a trope, but I don't find that that same energy about life, a fetus, is in the space of life of child sitting in classroom when the gunman comes.

Rabbi Danya: Exactly.

Jacqui Lewis: Or life of child who is at school hungry because the parents are broke. Or life of child who is sexually molested and kept in the family. It is just insanity to me. Sorry, listeners.

So this, what Rabbi just did, what Rabbi I'm going to call the Rabbi just did is scriptural reflection on why abortion, why reproductive freedom is a Jewish value. And I'm really wanting to say to listeners the text that precedes our text, that is the text of Rabbi Jesus, Yeshua, is this text that Rabbi Danya is talking about. So what's up with us? Show me where in the Christian Scripture there's something about how abortion should just break our country? Just talk to me about that. Y'all call me later, because I'm talking to Danya now. But give me a call if you have an answer to that question,

Rabbi Danya: Because people will ask. Jews do not derive Jewish law from poetic metaphor.

Jacqui Lewis: So that line from Psalms, that line from Jeremiah, we understand that it's a metaphor being used to make a different point, right? Exodus is clearly a legal text. It is telling you what to do in a specific situation, and it's making its terms clear.

And Psalm 139 is a poetry. Yeah.

Rabbi Danya: Right. Yeah, Jeremiah's just saying you are destined for this job, guy.

Jacqui Lewis: Right, right.

And Psalm 139 is saying, we are wonderfully created in the image of the holy.

Rabbi Danya: Right.

Jacqui Lewis: And that's so nice. Yeah.

Rabbi Danya: How lovely.

Jacqui Lewis: It's very lovely.

Okay, so I am today, as we speak, mourning the recent loss of my Father.

Rabbi Danya: Sorry.

Jacqui Lewis: Yeah. Thank you, sweetie. My friends have been so, all y'all have been so loving and amazing to me, kind colleagues in the world. He was literally on his deathbed wrestling with what did he do to get ALS? And I was wrestling with him like, "Nothing."

So maybe just a couple minutes on theodicy, as we mourn the world, the burning of Hawaii, and the melting ice caps, and the hunger, and the poverty and the hunting of Black people with guns, and the rising antisemitism, and woo, we could make a list of all of the... It's a hot mess of a hot mess time. And I just wonder, if Harold Kushner gives me such thought or forethought, Rabbi Kushner, when bad things happen to good people, but Rabbi Danya might have something to say about theodicy as we think about wrapping it. Where's your faith in the text on why there's just sometimes some unleashed junk in the universe that knocks us off our feet?

Rabbi Danya: I think two things. And I think they are compatible, personally. I think, number one, most of the suffering that we experience in the world is the result of human beings misusing their free will horrifically. The reason the planet is burning is our fault, right? The reason for racism, antisemitism, and so many of the horrific things happening now are the fault of human beings, just straight up. God didn't create gas chambers, right?

Jacqui Lewis: No.

Rabbi Danya: God did not decide to let innocent Black people get gunned down in the street, right? That was people's choices. That's the free will thing. And we have to take responsibility for it. And we have to do the repair work. We have to do the amends work. That's on us.

Jacqui Lewis: That's right.

Rabbi Danya: And we have to also remember that, my Mother died of breast cancer. And we poison the air and the water. My conception of God is not a man in the sky with a pair of dice being like, "I think Jamie over down here should be the one," right? It's just the toxicity is everywhere and it will catch innocent people in its net. I think that.

And I also think that if we want to go back to the text, at the end of Job, Job spends however many chapters screaming, "Why. Why am I suffering? Why has everything gone horribly for me?" His friends show up and mansplain, they're useless.

And then God shows up into the whirlwind and said, "Did you make giraffes? No. Okay. Part of being a human being that suffering is part of our lot."

And there may be when I die, I'll get the answer key and it'll be like, "Oh, there's all comes for logical reasons and there's..."

But I doubt it, right? I just think that part of being a human being is that we get the magic and the opportunities to love one another. And part of being a human being is that there's suffering and heartbreak as part of the project, too. And we have to do the best we can with the free will to try to prevent as much suffering as possible. And that is literally our job down here, right? As Rabbi Akiva and your favorite Rabbi said, loving your neighbor as yourself is one of the big ones in the Torah right? That's Leviticus 19:18. That's the work. We have to show up and take care of each other down here. That's our job. And that doesn't mean that we're magically protected from ever feeling hard feelings, or suffering, or experiencing pain. That's just part of being a person, too.

Jacqui Lewis: Somehow many of us, some of us, lots of us, have created a agreement with God in our minds, that if we're good enough, we will be able to live in a bubble of prophylactic, be protected from all the harm, from all the things. I'm just wanting to say as plain as I can to the people listening, it doesn't seem to be true, right? It just doesn't seem to be true that our goodness, our kindness, our faithfulness protect us from the possibility that we will be hurt, or wounded, or die, or have a crazy climate. That in our freedom, let's say, in our image of Godness, in our imago Dei, in our whatever, personhood. And the ways that we are created like God is to be able to create with God a healing world, I'll say, right, a healing world. And maybe there's a presence that comforts us. That's what I think. God's like, "Jacqui, I see you. I feel you. I feel you. It's tough today. I'm with you. Gotcha." Right? And for me, that's become enough. That's become enough for me.

Rabbi Danya: It's got to be. God isn't Santa Claus, right? We have to be willing to grow in our theological conceptions and to be able to move beyond the vending machine. If I pray correctly, then God's going to give me a sports car or whatever, and make sure that I never experience any pain or suffering. This is not it.

But you are interconnected with all of everything, and you are connected with the great big bigness of the Divine, and the universe, and can tap into that. And it can help give you the bravery, and the strength, and the ability to keep moving forward. And the ability to show up for yourself and for the people who need you. And to live out your Divine imageness, which is all we got.

Jacqui Lewis: Which is all that we got. And that's a lot. That's enough. It can be enough.

I preached a sermon a couple of weeks ago, Danya, that we've recast with some images and stuff that's coming out in a.... Corey, I'm saying this out loud so you'll remember to help me to do this. But this beautiful program we've put together called Labor is a Movement, let freedom dance. But I was laughing so hard at my wrestling with the text, I had this image of praying for yellow shoes, or God telling you to buy those yellow shoes. I am going to buy these shoes because I prayed about these yellow shoes and God said it was okay for me to buy these yellow shoes.

Rabbi Danya: Get the shoes.

Jacqui Lewis: And that's so comical that we can laugh at it. But there's a way in which that vending machine, genie, rabbit's foot God, is just there to give you the stuff you've been asking for.

And if we don't let our theologies, let's say, progress, or go up, or become mature, then we

almost end up with a God that we are forced to break up with because he, and that God to me is a he, the God I pray to is a she. But that God, is a he. He's withholding, he's nefarious. You don't know what's going to happen with him. Is he in a good mood today to give you the yellow shoes? That is just crazy town to me. Sorry, y'all. But that just doesn't work, right? If we are stuck there, we're stuck.

Rabbi Danya: Yeah. Because you never get all of the, first of all, you never get everything you want. And so then what do you do when you're shaking the vending machine and saying, "I punched in C4, where's my candy bar?"

And number two, what you want and what you need are not the same thing. And when you listen to that still, small voice, it comes in with inconvenient directions, often.

Jacqui Lewis: That is true.

Rabbi Danya: For me, the still, small voice of our deepest, deepest, deepest intuition is the radio station to God.

Jacqui Lewis: Yes,.

Rabbi Danya: And the number of times that I have whined, "Do I have to," in conversation. That is not how I want to spend my day. And if we're talking about repentance and repair, that includes fully owning the harm that I caused, and doing all of this really inconvenient and painful work to change, and own my stuff, and all of it, right? Or, whatever, leaving my cool friends to go move to a city I don't want to live in because rabbinical school is the next thing, whatever it is, right? But there's so many things we don't want, but that we need and that are going to help us grow into the people we need to become. And if we focus all our intention on what we want and thinking that Santa Claus is going to show up with the Corvette all the time, of course we'll be disappointed.

Jacqui Lewis: We're really going to miss out. Absolutely. Well, wonderful, amazing, Rabbi Danya Ruttenberg, I'm so glad you're on the planet.

Rabbi Danya: Ray of Light, Jacqui Lewis, who I adore. I thank you so much for existing and shining the way you do.

Jacqui Lewis: Let us find our way to some liquid refreshments soon.

Rabbi Danya: Yes, amen.

Jacqui Lewis: Bless you in these High Holy Days that are upon you. And I just want to send you love, so much love for being you. I appreciate you so much.

Rabbi Danya: And it's so, so, so mutual. Thank you, my dear.

Jacqui Lewis: Thank you.

Thank you for listening to Love Period. As I reflect on my conversation with my friend Danya, I can't escape the feelings I have reading her book, *On Repentance and Repair*, a book about making amends in a broken world. She calls us to account y'all, always. So let's

think together about our role in repairing the breach and healing what's broken in ourselves, in our communities, and all around the globe. Let's use our lives that way.

This is Jaqui Lewis, and you've been listening to Love Period. I'm so glad we share this space together. And I'll talk with you soon. Take care.