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You're listening to masculine birth ritual a podcast about creating life outside the lines. Today we're talking with Rabbi Elliott Kukula. He's the first known ordained trans rabbi and is a nonbinary papa to a 3 month old baby. Here's a nugget of our rich conversation.

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EK: "So I had this other thought for the podcast conversation today and I thought I would just leave it on your voicemail now. Maybe too late to include but I was just thinking about it. So what I was thinking about was as a queer and trans person I feel like I have so many other queer and trans people and myself need so much parenting as adults and I feel like I've spent my whole life until X was born parenting other adults and there's this huge relief at getting to parent a baby. Since so much of this parenting of adults has been dealing with adults who didn't get attachment a secure attachment as a baby so to actually be with a baby the like. We can actually work on a secure attachment as opposed to being with adults like myself and other queer and trans people who need all this reparative parenting because of you know queer and trans trauma. And I wonder how many other queer and trans parents have that experience of just being this huge relief because we're so used to parenting each other.

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Against this background of having not been parented the way we needed to the first time "

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GWB: This interview's airing on November 1st just on the heels of a deeply troubling week in the United States which has included two white supremacist murderers killing 11 people in the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh Pennsylvania and a different white supremacist killing two black elders in a grocery store outside of Louisville Kentucky which he entered after he attempted to enter a black church that was locked. I send my condolences to the families and communities of these people lost this week I am sending my witness and solidarity to listeners that are Jewish and Black. May those of us who are able have the strength to turn and face the next level of hard work required to end white supremacy, Christian supremacy, and anti-Semitism.

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The week began with 45's administration announcing that they would be changing the definition of gender within the Department of Health and Human Services in a way that attempts to remove protections of transgender people in access to medical care and educational protections within the scope of federal agencies. This interview was recorded before the events of this intense week. It offers depth and vision and trans Rabbi parent laughter and the sound of a baby cooing. In this episode we talk about Jewish rituals and Yiddish cultural practice and I want to remind listeners that are not Jewish and do not have Jewish cultural ancestry to listen with appreciation of the wisdom but not adopt religious rituals and practices that are not ours.

[00:03:12]

Here we go.

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GWB: Hi Elliot:

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EK: Hi Grover.

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GWB: what gender words do you use to describe yourself?

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EK: That's a good question. Tran's and nonbinary um... sissy. I think those are the main ones

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GWB: okay. Do you ever use words like masculine man guy ever?

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EK: Yes. I would use masculine I would use trans masculine. I don't like man. I also I would identify as like a femme guy. I generally identify as trans masculine and femme.

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GWB: Thank you. Are there other things about your cultural identities or social positions that are important for us to know to understand where you're coming from?

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EK: Mmm. Well, I'm Jewish I'm a rabbi I'm white I'm a new Papa. That's pretty essential. To a three and a half year old... three and a half months old! Just zooming forward there. I'm sure many other things but those are some starting points.

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GWB: OK. So now I'm going into question. OK great. I feel somewhat awkward because you are my actual friend I've never interviewed you before.

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EK: Me too. OK. You will just roll with that.

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GWB: So you're one of a very small number of trans Rabbis, correct.? Can you tell us what your position is in your community and what role you play.

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EK: As a trans Rabbi?

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GWB: Yeah.

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EK: that's a tough one. Well I was the first to ordain trans Rabbi that we know of. The first openly trans Rabbi ordained by mainstream movement. I would say that we know of because there may have been an openly trans Rabbi in the 1930s in Berlin and got lost in history. I was ordained in 2006. Now there's probably something like 15 trans Rabbis.

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So we've come a long way but there still there's still a small group of us so I have kind of an unusual role of being kind of an elder in the community even though I'm 43.

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But I've been like an elder since I was like you know 38 because I mean and I think that is just really speaks to what deep need there is for mentorship in trans community that or how hard it is to survive as a trans person that there aren't a lot of older role models and leadership. I've often you know longed for older generation of trans Rabbis beyond that.

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GWB: Yes.

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EK: So I am a rabbi in the Bay Area Jewish healing center. I work in a team of four Rabbis and we serve the whole Bay Area. Anything to do with Jewish spiritual care for grieving. Illness and dying. So that is the whole of the work that we do.

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GWB: All grieving? (laughter) Seems like a tall order. All Jewish people in the Bay Area that are grieving?

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EK: Yeah I mean

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GWB: it's mostly grieving around like illness and death?

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EK: Yes primarily grieving the death of people.

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GWB: Got it. Thank you.

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EK: Yeah.

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GWB: Were you out as trans before you became a Rabbi? Like how did your two different callings into new forms relate to each other or are they separate?

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EK: I actually came out as trans the same year I was ordained as a Rabbi in 2006. So they were very connected for me. I didn't plan to come out really that year it was a really difficult time to come out in the same moment as being ordained. But it really was you know discovering that I couldn't step into this role of being a Rabbi without a coming out process. And at the time because I was the first I had no mentors you know no one had ever done that before and you know and I had an incredible ton of student loans and no one knew if I would be employable as a Rabbi.

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You know the closest I had for mentorship were the sort of first out Gay and Lesbian Rabbis. And a lot of people were not all that encouraging didn't think you know the world was ready for a Trans Rabbi. There was definitely a feeling that I might not be employable. So it was terrifying. You know the coming out process was really one of those moments in life of just kind of leaping. Yeah.

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And I have been lucky to be employed as a Rabbi while I work in a field that is not necessarily what you would expect in terms of working with elders and you know it's something that I discovered early on was that being trans could actually be a profound connector to people as a spiritual doing spiritual care for people on all sorts of margins in life and in all sorts of transitions including the transition out of life. And it was you know not an area that I was encouraged pursued.

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All that of all you know people were like if you're going to work it would be in the most liberal synagogue or in an LGBT congregation not necessarily you know in nursing homes that we have a stereotype that elders are going to be the least open to a trans population and very sick people are you know the least open to something new. And I really discovered just the opposite that you know elders and people who are very sick and people who are dying and in moments of transformation. Are often you know going through a similar process that I went through when I came out of you know... cracking open and are often at their most open and most vulnerable. And that being served by someone who clearly is liminal in some way and is fairly marginal in some way can be a profound form of connection. In fifteen years now of being a chaplain of doing this kind of work I can count on one hand really at the times that someone's really struggling with my gender. And those times have been spiritually powerful often. You know there's been a couple of times I've had to just not serve someone but most of the times it's been spiritually meaningful when someone struggled with my gender.

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GWB: meaning that they're able to transform that struggle?

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EK: meaning that we are able to use that struggle in something that is relevant for their spiritual care and that's what I'm for for that usually you know we're able to not get stuck in that but but figure out what it is that is what is being touched on in them. And maybe it's something about their own gender or something about their own transition in that moment or feeling outside or feeling in-between things or feeling like the world is changing really fast.

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GWB: And what made you want to become a Rabbi.

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EK: What made me want to become a rabbi... I can't exactly answer that one. You know I think it is kind of like calling it's not exactly a want. Where my life path you know sort of became very clear that the need was there.

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GWB: Do you have any more information about what it feels like to feel called?

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EK: That's a good question. Well the full story really was that my first wife- I'm married for the second time now- was involved in a really long conversion process to Judaism with the conservative movement at the time and was turned down right at the end for being a lesbian in Canada at the time in Toronto where we were living where Judaism is much more conservative. And that experience I had such a terrible experience with Rabbis basically with Rabbinic leadership not standing up for us and not doing what it needed to do that I kind of had the end of it was like I'm going to just be my own damn Rabbi. So. It really was the impetus for it originally.

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And it really is such a you know I forget that often because it was so lightened ago now this was like late 90s and I'm second marriage and so much has changed since then but every once in a while... you know I've created a lot of ritual around queer and trans lives.

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Every once in a while when I meet someone or get an email from someone in like Kansas who's like using one of my life cycle rituals or something like that. As like a portal into a sense of belonging that they wouldn't have otherwise. I remember that I was like... right. This is why I did this because it became a lot of other things along the way.

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GWB: Can you tell us what a life cycle ritual is?

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EK: Well I wrote a blessing for gender transitioning a long time ago actually even before I came out as trans that just a very simple blessing based on the structure of traditional Jewish blessings for that could be used for really any moment in transitioning that was written and published and like I think around 2003 I actually wrote it for a friend of mine who wanted a blessing when he was going on testosterone. And it was sort of a moment in trans issues began just beginning to become a bit more public especially in religion.

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So it was published in a book and this was one of those things that it just got picked up by the Associated Press and within like the New York Times The Washington Post like everywhere was like this news it was like oh well reform movement sanctions like blessing for gender change... for like

"sex change operations" was like the headline which was really not at all. What had happened it was just a book published by the reform movement on life cycles you know different life moments that had published this.

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Not that it was like an official statement but at the time the reform movement was really still struggling with me. But because that happened this blessing got kind of everywhere and then to everyone's hands which was really kind of a wonderful thing. And it's still really out in the world and I still get I still will just stumble upon you know on the Internet people posting videos of you know taking testosterone for the first time and using the blessing or people will e-mail me randomly with their experiences and things like that.

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GWB: Awesome.

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EK: I've also had the honor too... As time has gone on and things have somewhat changed... help edit since then sort of that what was reported in the news which wasn't true at the time sort of became true and that later versions of the sort of official prayer books and Rabbis manuals for the reform movement got edited and I did have the opportunity to put in some blessing's around trans moments and also put in nonbinary options basically plural gave them options which goes now to like synagogue's across... Those are the official books that go to like rabbis and synagogues all across the country which is a wonderful thing to have to do... the life cycle change. And you know things have really changed that there is now all these people creating also creating these kind of rituals.

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And it has changed so dramatically. When I started my career when I was first ordained I would get phone calls from the. Reform rabbis literally across the country who had just heard of me and would write me letters like I have a trans person in my congregation. What do I do? What do I say? And my answer would always be like ah... hello? Welcome? It would be the most...

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GWB: My Fees Are...

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EK: (Laughing) the most basic questions like How do I like treat this person like a person? And now I get questions like you know we have a 12 year old trans girl in our congregation. You know how how can we celebrate her Bat Mitzva and her name change at the same time or you have like a bunch of nonbinary kids what are some nonbinary terms we can use in a you know in our school and you know it's just the questions have changed so much. And at the same timethere are things that haven't changed. I mean that is I think a lot of this change and visibility has really changed things for trans people who are acceptable in other ways.

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And that's really true in congregations. Trans people who are middle class or are upper-middle class and who are able bodied whose behavior conforms with what we expect in an Upper-middle-class synagogue environment. But in terms of really grappling with the kind of trauma that trans people have and the kind of economic oppression that trans people have and really making space in congregations for poor people and people struggling with mental illness and people who really profoundly look different that work hasn't really happened.

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GWB: Yeah thank you for clarifying that and naming it. Yeah I think it's important for people who might have imagined any number things in that space. Well that is really cool cause I didn't know that you had been writing rituals already for decades now for people and so I'm wondering if you can tell us a little bit about the legacy of rituals in Judaism for conception and birth?

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EK: Well there's a lot of ritual that I know of around conception. There's a lot of ritual around welcoming babies. There is a ritual for traditionally a woman to say after giving birth which is a really beautiful blessing that is basically a blessing for surviving danger and the birth person says for herself or for her baby for herself. And she says that after she's birth and is traditionally sentence you can say that in synagogue or in the... but it's traditionally said in community.

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GWB: OK. So it's not like just like thank God I survived that?

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EK: it basically is thank God I survived that. But it's it's traditionally said in the community and there's a communal response to it. It's actually a blessing I really like a lot and you would say any time you go through any kind of life threatening experience you know a car accident or surgery.

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But it's always that no matter what the birth is a part of coming out of a birth is to say this blessing publicly and have it responded to you.

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GWB: Is that ritual highly gendered?

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EK: It's not gendered at all actually because that that blessing is something that anyone would say for a dangerous occasion and it's just that a birth parent says it for birth. So it's actually incredibly easy to translate for anyone who's who's given birth.

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And it really just means it's *Gomel*, well which the verb in Hebrew *Gomel* means like. It's kind of that closest... the way I understand it is that it's the closest Jewish concept to the Christian concept of grace of kind of unconditional love that basically means goodness that is granted even if you didn't necessarily earn it. You don't have to do anything for. So it's an acknowledgement that people die who are just as good as you. And the fact that you survived a dangerous event doesn't mean that you were more righteous. It's just it just happened you just happened to survive something that other people don't survive.

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Well it's actually a very meaningful blessing for me and because of the work I do with people in these very vulnerable moments in hospitals it's a blessing that I've used a lot with people in the NICU or with

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really dangerous births because not all liberal Jews are aware of it and it often can be a powerful way to to mark a really medically dangerous or complicated birth that this is a part of that tradition. So that is one of the main rituals for a birth person a birthing person. And then there are a lot of rituals to welcome the baby and the and the rituals welcome a baby are extremely gendered which is a real challenge. So the way a baby boy is traditionally welcomed is with circumcision and a baby girl is usually welcomed with a naming in synagogue.

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So my baby who has a penis. We don't know his gender yet, but he was born with a penis. We did a *Bris* for him which just means covenant without circumcision we decide we should not circumcise him on his 8th Day. So basically we did a *Bris* for him that would be a *Bris* that you could use for any gender. And then we also Named in the synagogue that would traditionally be what is done for a girl.

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GWB: So... I went to the naming ceremony and I had been to naming ceremonies before but they were

all girl babies.

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So I didn't realize that. So like that... Like the rabbi talking about the names and then like publicly welcoming him... normally wouldn't happen for him like he would never be... if he was in a traditional setting he would never have been announced in that way like the Bris or circumcision is his only entrance?

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EK: Right. So traditionally it would all happen at the Bris because all that the talking about the name and all of that happens at the Bris. But it is true that the Bris isn't traditionally is not isn't a part of the service in the same way. So there is something a lot more public about the baby naming for girls but it doesn't have the same ritual intensity as the circumcision for boys. And it's also not as specific in terms of time traditionally it is like the Shabat pretty close after birth. But you know we did it three and a half months later partly because we also did a Bris and we wanted some time to recover you know. But it doesn't have some of the same ritual weight as...

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Which is you know one of the reasons why contemporary queers have stopped have really questioned circumcision is because or at least for me I'll say for myself personally I was one of the most compelling arguments against circumcising our baby was that it was something that is only relevant if you have a penis. You know sort of have to keep maintaining a ritual that you need to have penis for felt you know problematic for me.

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GWB: Right. Yeah. So do you have other things that you want to say about the this part of the baby rituals or can I ask a clarifying question about birth rituals?

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EK: Go for it.

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GWB: OK. So are there either rituals or cultural traditions that you can think of? Because as a rabbi you're also a scholar of history right? That you can think of where people prepare for birth that are all about rituals or preparing for birth which I'm assuming are gendered to women and feminine, but we'll just start there.

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EK: Well there is a very rich history of Yiddish women's prayers and poetry around birth and conception that is not so much a ritual as much as a personal prayer and Yiddish has been you know Hebrew is the sort of language of scholarship and Yiddish is "quote" people's language and I'm sure that I'm more knowledgeable about some of these ritual.... or... not ritual. Some of these prayers from up in Yiddish which is the language of Jews from Europe and there are also traditions from Jews from Africa and Asia and other places.

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So there is a very there's like a huge body of literature in fact that's sort of the heart called Tkhines which are Yiddish women's prayers and really the heart of Tkhines is about conception and birth which I think was a lot of you know the period that these were written and the premodern period I think conception and birth was very central to women's lives.

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And a lot of these these prayers are incredibly beautiful you know prayers grappling with the difficulty of birth and the difficulties of infertility and a lot of the shared struggles around that whole experience. And there's a lot of superstition in Judaism as well that has traditionally always been kept by women around things that will help with conception. So that is you know traditionally you know when you make Challah for Shabat there's a time when you would say prayers for anyone in your

community that is struggling to conceive and things like that. So there's a lot of life a lot of traditions like that that are maintained.

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GWB: thank you. So for listeners that are listening along I'm asking Elliott this series of really specific questions Even when there is perhaps that we know of currently an absence of trans masculine or genderqueer approaches to these things because they are tools that are community adaptable that sometimes we just need to unearth for Jewish people or people of Yiddish ancestry to rework as it works for them.

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EK: Yeah. And something that there isn't in the tradition which is a resource which people might not know about is that there are more than two genders in traditional Jewish literature there is six genders.

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GWB: say more about this...

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EK: Traditionally there are six genders. In particular there there's four big ones there's zahar and nekevah which is what we would probably translate as male and female. However if you got more than two genders then the male and female translation is question because they're dividing up gender differently. And then there's the tumtum and androgynos which are figures beyond male and female. And there is a whole body of literature in the Mishnah which is the oldest layer of Jewish law and then more involved in the Talmud of talking about you know how do you welcome a baby tumtum or androgynos. So the question so much of a tumtum or androgynos giving birth is not discussed that much but a tumtum or androgynos being born is fully discussed. For example there's a whole question of normally you would not have most rituals you do not do on Shabat you just do Shabat. But an exception to that is a circumcision that it's so important to do it on the eighth day you do it on Shabat no matter what. But there's a whole conversation about so if you have an androgynos which is understood to be a figure that has some kind of Penis, some kind of micropenis maybe also a vagina.

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Do you do a circumcision on shabat or not. There's a huge body of literature exploring that question and I think you know this material's so important just because of the fact that we exist in this. Yes. The fact that it's very patriarchal a lot of it really prioritizes having a penis in terms of status. And it's extremely misogynist as not to romanticize the material but just the fact that it's not binary. Just the fact that we exist.

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GWB: Yeah and there's evidence of intersex existence. Yeah. Long ago.

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EK: Yes. And there's a whole conversation as well about if someone makes a vow and says you know if I have a boy I'll do this and if I have a girl I'll do this and then they have a tumtum. What do they do? So there's an acknowledgement that things don't necessarily fit in the binary.

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GWB: Wow that's so interesting. It seems like the elders of the ancestors like hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years ago were reckoning with this perhaps more than our own society in and generalized leadership ways.

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EK: Absolutely. Absolutely. I mean this is a pre modern era when the medical industrial complex couldn't make us invisible. So right there we are. And it's something that Judaism always... Judaism likes neat categories but is really interested in the things that don't fit in categories. So there is a profound fascination with things that don't fit into gender categories. It doesn't mean there isn't an

attempt to herd us into the binary but we're not made invisible. There's an exploration and curiosity about the things that don't fit which is very different than the modern scientific model which is let's just have a little surgery or do you know take that under and say we never existed to begin with.

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Right. And there's something so profoundly empowering and this is not a new phenomenon. Here we are in the text from 2000 years ago.

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GWB: OK so now I'm going to ask less specifically about birth and conception and more about continuing on this theme. If there are other stories or legacies of gender queerness that you would like to offer up for people who maybe haven't heard about their legacy in these stories and specifically any stories that have to do with gender queerness and new life or the maintenance of life?

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EK: you know the story that pops to mind right now is there's a story in the Talmud about a cisgender man whose wife dies and he has an infant and he sprouts breasts and starts breastfeeding.

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GWB: That would be an example Yeah.

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EK: And it's not a very well you know it's got such a well-known story and it's sometimes used as a story as an example of you know a miracle story or you know of God providing. But it's also just such an incredible image of a gender story of that that potential and again this is a text from 2000 years ago of that image of a father... a cisgender father breastfeeding as an incredibly holy act. It's really a resource in the tradition. There are a lot of resources you know probably in so many traditions that are that we don't know about or we don't focus on that.

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You know my feeling is that people have that masculine people have you know birth and parenting and conception stories going back absence of years and genderqueer people that we have always existed and those stories are there in the tradition.

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I mean I wonder where that story came from. Maybe it's just made up from nowhere but you know maybe somebody really knew someone who was breastfeeding you know who knows... or chestfeeding.

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GWB: Yeah you know there was a chest feeding husband.

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EK: Yeah. However they came to do that. Yeah. Yeah.

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GWB: You were about to tell another story.

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EK: Oh yeah I was about to tell another story. I can tell...

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GWB: (laughing) there's a really cute baby!

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EK: Here he is. (laughter)

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GWB: do you want to talk about parenting and gender?

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EK: Sure.

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GWB: OK. But before I move there I'm wondering Is there is there any other things that we didn't get to that you think of as opportunities like rituals or preparations for people who practice Judaism or have that legacy that they might look to a repurpose in their preparations for birth or conception or becoming a parent?

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EK: Yeah yeah well I mean I think you know the history of Tkhenes I said the history of Yiddish women's prayers I think could be... are beautiful and are really a resource for people of all genders. I mean particularly for any of us who are not cismen they really speak to just an experience of being not part of the mainstream power tradition. And I think that there's a lot in there that could speak to trans people and nonbinary people as well as friends of a similar position. It's often a ritual in Jewish tradition for a lot of different things to go to Mikva which is a ritual bath for. Which I think is a really wonderful ritual to repurpose it. It's just such a palpable and amazing ritual and something that is useful you know post birth.

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It's traditionally done after birth after a certain amount of time before you know rejoining the world. And it's just a ritual that really works you know water works as a ritual. I think also the Gomel blessing that I was talking about of having gone through something dangerous that really is... (baby squeaks) Yes it was dangerous for you to being born.... I mean I think that is such a. I mean it's such a potent experience birthing and that blessing actually has no gender to it at all.

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Oh good one has no gender to it at all. And is it really is a powerful ritual and a way to be communally recognized for the way that experience is so terrifying.

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GWB: yeah. Awesome thank you. And so you are a parent.

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EK: Apparently.

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GWB: You are. For three and a half months now.

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EK: Yes. Yes. He seems to think I'm his parent.

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GWB: You are his parent, yeah. I'm just wondering how you're feeling in your new life as a parent and how you're feeling in relationship to how you thought you would feel gender wise and how you do feel.

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EK: Yeah. Huh. That's a good question. I feel differently than I expected to feel. You know I use he him pronouns even though I identify as nonbinary and I've always really wanted to be a papa. And there is a way in which and I'm kind of growing into papa and liking it more. But there is a way in which it doesn't fully express my nonbinary experience that I have had a lot more sort of feelings that are really profoundly nonbinary since he's been born.

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I also have you know realized they carry a lot of stuff of being raised as a woman when it comes to being a parent that I think sometimes... I don't generally pass. But when I do pass and people see me as papa and I'm called Papa. There's a way in which that doesn't cover it. In terms of ...there's so much weight that I... of you know like getting it right as a parent that I think you're raised with. If you were born female that I feel like I have all of that. Like I don't feel like it don't get any of the breaks in... you know what I mean? like for myself you know.

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GWB: Yeah. Like your internal expectations

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EK: my internal expectations that. Like it's difficult to be away from him for a moment that whole work life ...work... I hate the whole I hate the term work life balance because that implies that work isn't life...

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GWB: Or that that and that this isn't work.

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EK: you know everything with the whole you know trying to balance family and work time and how impossible that feels and I'm sure many men feel that way. But I do really feel like I have this set of female expectations that feels really complicated. And yeah I mean I think it just feels... and neither mom nor pop feels exactly right. I mean I definitely feel like nonbinary relationship with him and I'm looking towards the other nonbinary parents in terms of to try to figure out what that looks like. I mean I really like to know what things look like. That there is something in being able to imagine.

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And it helps me to have other role models for sure.

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GWB: Yeah absolutely.

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EK: There's a way in which you know I like long to breastfeed him which I didn't expect. You know I've never had any feelings about my chest other than wanting it to be masculine. Until he was born. And then there's this strong sort of very physical and hormonal desire. And that was very surprising for me.

[00:39:02]

GWB: Yeah. And so listeners know you didn't carry him.

[00:39:06]

EK: I did not.

[00:39:06]

GWB: So that's an added surprise.

[00:39:09]

EK: Yeah yeah yes. So that was very surprising and never had any plans to breastfeed him. So that was like a total shock to me to have that feeling in my body and spirit.

[00:39:26]

GWB: And like I'm going to speak to this directly because on the episode that I just posted today. The interview with Mac Brydum... he talked about he is a nanny and trying to conceive and he is read as. Male when he's out all the time and so he's expecting the like.... Dad praise that happens. So it sounds like your experience is not only that you don't want dad priase as he talked about too but that your

embodied experience of is not not expecting it not wanting it and having, it sounds like, a narrative for your own self. That's more like you would have been raised with. Which is like your duty is to do X Y Z.

[00:40:18]

EK: Yeah. Yeah. No. I mean I think my internal monologue is very mom. Which is why when people interact with me as a dad it feels a little weird but if people interact with me as a mom it feels awful. You know so it's like you know

[00:40:34]

GWB: yeah but and you people interact with your partner As a mom?

[00:40:38]

EK: they do very much though which is interesting. You know people we were talking about she was talking about how when she's out with him in a carrier. How other moms. Give her like this like mom smile they give her like a little mom look. And I was like oh that's interesting. And I'm like I'm like you mean they're smiling at you because he's cute and she's like no no no no. That's like. And I'm like oh it's like Queer Eye like when you're like oh we have this in common. I'm like I don't get that I don't get that at all. I don't get it from Dad's either though because I guess there's not that many dads walking around with their babies.

[00:41:15]

GWB: Also dads don't interact with each other right. Yes. Is my experience of being seen as a dad. I can tell because no women in the playground are giving me the eyes. Yeah. And then I let go to stand next to a dad and he just completely ignores me. Which, like women would not do on the playground unless their kids are older and they are just like really done with the camaraderie. Yeah.

[00:41:39]

Yeah they're just like the gender culture of that.

[00:41:42]

EK: It's like men's change rooms. No one interacts.

[00:41:44]

GWB: Yeah

[00:41:45]

EK: although even more so.

[00:41:47]

GWB: Yeah I mean I don't know about other cultures but at least in the Bay Area in a culture of predominantly white men although you know we both live in multiracial neighborhoods. But...

[00:42:06]

EK: (talking to baby) Hi! Hi special (baby squeaks) hi! I mean I would love to be in a group of nonbinary parents where you give each other the eye. Yeah that would be amazing. Yeah.

[00:42:21]

GWB: You mean formally or like one where you can go to the grocery store and you're like...

[00:42:24]

EK: both. I mean formally is like more imagineable to happen. But I'd love to be walking into the grocery store and see another nonbinary parent and have us give each other the eye and be like "hey". I'm sure that will happen eventually yeah. And be like hey you have that moment of connection and thinking. You know it's almost beyond gender the experience in this moment. It's you know it's sort of like what I was saying before about how it's sort of a relief to not think about myself that much. That's some of the experience that I've had. It's not being gender nonconforming and not passing and being the first trans Rabbi. All of that is like so big and takes up so much space. He doesn't know any of

that. He doesn't have a gender for me. He doesn't really have a gender yet.

[00:43:30]

bn between us. We're both just. Even though Abby and I are profoundly different genders we're both just his people which there's something really sweet about that too which is not exactly what we expected. We expected to be more mama papa and that's not really how parenting has worked out for us it's been a lot more more fluid than that. Yeah. So there is something very sweet and freeing about the fact that in our relationship itself gender doesn't matter at all. Right now what's going on right now in the world. I have to grapple with the fact that I could potentially be raising as this white man.

[00:44:44]

So there's that huge responsibility as well in terms of how much power and privilege he he will. There's a good chance he will be inherit. And what I need to teach him how to how to deal with.

[00:45:02]

GWB: OK. Last question you get a time machine. It's 30 years into the future. The baby is 30 and three months and you're sitting next to his friends who are super cool and one of them shares a gender expression with you. What do you hope is different about their world as they either have just become a parent or are about to become a parent.

[00:45:30]

EK: That's a good question. That's a good question. I mean it's hard for me to get past the beginning of the question of 30 years from now where I'm like. Well first of all it's really hot.

[00:45:44]

I hope we're all OK.

[00:45:46]

I mean honestly that is so so big in my experience of parenting right now thinking about the future. It's hard to get beyond that once we have survived that.

[00:45:56]

Well I hope that they don't live in a fascist state...

[00:46:00]

GWB: YEs. Like speak these prayers out into the air

[00:46:03]

EK: where you know some of the basic rights that LGBT people have won over the past decades aren't under threat every single day. I hope that they don't live in a time when trans women are women of color are being murdered on a regular basis.

[00:46:23]

I hope they live in a moment where it just feels normal to try out different genders and that's part of growing up. I feel like we are having a little taste of that right now for certain people in certain places. There is a freedom that was unimaginable to me growing up. I hope that people that you know 30 years from now that that's that kind of exploration and creativity is celebrated and surrounded by ritual and celebration. And I hope that we have new kinds of queer families that we aren't just living and you know protected nuclear families but as we have more and more possibilities as queer and trans people and angry people that we will have different kinds of family structures that help us survive what is going to be really difficult next few decades.

[00:47:15]

I think no matter what. I hope We also have new families to help us survive. And ways of parenting that are more communal.

[00:47:26]

I mean I think this is slightly different than the gender topic but for me it's very related to queerness that it's almost impossible to be in 2018. I mean I feel like we have so many privileges Abby and I and we're still like barely surviving. And it's just not set out to be a parent. And one of the reasons one of the points of being queer I mean besides sex. which is great. and Fabulous

[00:47:58]

GWB: And bodily self determination.

[00:48:01]

EK: I've always understood queerness as being a lot about communal survival. And I would love to see us really have better ways to support each other in parenting and ways that are just about like one family or one situation. But where is it really true...

[00:48:20]

(baby cries)

[00:48:22]

EK: Yes you hate capitalism

[00:48:23]

GWB: Down with capitalism down with heteronormativity!

[00:48:27]

EK: I think that's your last word.

[00:48:37]

GWB: Cool. All right. Thank you so much Elliot. And tiny baby.

[00:48:40]

EK: Tiny baby!

[00:48:44]

GWB: Thank you for listening to masculine birth ritual. to ensure this can continue please go to [patreon.com/masculinebirthritual](https://patreon.com/masculinebirthritual) to become a Patron.

[00:48:53]

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