

JEWISH HUMOR

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It is the sound of one Jewish person *kvetching*. It is the essence of years of cultural thought and emotion distilled into a short joke. A philosophical lesson or point, told with a laugh, this is what I coined "Jewish Zen Humor." Although funny at face value, these jokes contain subtle layers, which when peeled away, invite further philosophical examination. There is a certain wry, intellectual quality to this kind of humor which is unique to the Jewish culture, and an understanding of the Jewish experience adds additional levels of meaning to these jokes. Traditionally, the Jewish people have used humor to cope with the alienation, tragedy, and abuse they've suffered. Laughing at themselves is as much a part of their culture as chicken soup and matzo balls.

JEWISH JOKES

Enjoy these jokes which I've collected over the years. Read and discuss them, then ask residents to share their favorites.

- A man calls his mother in Florida. "Mom, how are you?" asks the son. "Not so good," says the mother. "I've been very weak." The son asks, "Why are you so weak?" She says, "Because I haven't eaten in 38 days." The son says, "That's terrible. Why haven't you eaten in 38 days?" The mother answers, "Because I didn't want my mouth to be full of food just in case you should call."
- "You know, Moishe, if I were as rich as the Rothschilds, I'd be richer than the Rothschilds." "Really? How do you figure that, Heshie?" "Well, I'd do a little teaching on the side."
- Poor Lipkowitz was hit by a crosstown bus and lay in the middle of 57th Street, bruised and bleeding. Pedestrians ran to assist him. A kind woman took off her sweater, rolled it up, and gently put it under his head. "Are you comfortable?" she asked. "I make a living," he replied.
- Morrie runs into Bennie on 7th Avenue. Bennie looks great, although Morrie knows he's in serious financial trouble. "Bennie! You look terrific! What's your secret?" "All that worry was really wearing me out, so I hired somebody to worry for me." "But how are you going to pay him?" asks Morrie. "That's not my problem," says Bennie. "Let him worry!"
- Esther, Yetta, and Sadie are sitting around talking about how much their daughters love them. Esther says, "My Rhoda loves me so much, she just bought me a fur stole!" Yetta says, "My Sheila loves me so much, she just paid for me to spend a month in an exclusive hotel in Miami Beach." Sadie says, "Yeah, yeah, that's nice. But my Michelle loves me even more than that. Every week she goes to a fancy Park Avenue therapist and pays him \$300 a visit, and all she talks about is me!"
- A Frenchman, German, and Jew are trudging across the Sahara. The Frenchman says, "I'm so hot. I'm so thirsty. I must have wine!" The German says, "I'm so hot. I'm so thirsty. I must have beer!" The Jew cries, "I'm so hot! I'm so thirsty! I must have diabetes!"
- Q: What's the difference between a Jewish mother-in-law and a Rottweiler? A: Eventually the Rottweiler lets go.
- Q: Why do Jewish divorces cost so much? A: They're worth it.
- Q: Why do Jewish men die before their wives? A: They want to.
- Q: Why is it so important for the groom at a Jewish wedding to stomp on a wine glass? A: Because it's the last time he'll put his foot down.
- A Jewish boy comes home from school and tells his mother he has been given a part in the school play. "Wonderful," says the mother. "What part is it?" The boy says, "I play the part of the Jewish husband." The mother scowls and says, "Go back and tell your teacher you want a speaking part!"
- Yankel, Minnie's young son, comes rushing in from school one day, out of breath, shvitzing, gasping for air. "What's wrong?" cried Minnie. "Oh, Mamma, you'll be so proud of me! Today, I saved the whole two-dollar fare by running behind the bus all the way home." "Shtummie!" yells Minnie. "Better you should have run behind a taxi and saved \$10!"

- A classic example of *chutzpa* (nerve or “moxie”) is someone who kills his father and mother, then throws himself on the mercy of the court because he is an orphan.
- Adult: “Do you know the four food groups?” Jewish child: “Dairy, meat, *pareve* (neither milk nor meat), and *treif* (that which is not kosher).”
- Short summary of every Jewish holiday: “They tried to kill us. We won. Let’s eat.”
- Q: Where does a Jewish husband hide money from his wife? A: Under the vacuum cleaner.
- Q: Why aren’t there any Jewish mothers on parole boards? A: They’d never let anyone finish a sentence.

BIBLICAL HUMOR: THEME SONGS

- Adam and Eve: *Strangers in Paradise*
- Methuselah: *Stayin’ Alive*
- Noah: *Raindrops Keep Falling on My Head*
- Esther: *I Feel Pretty*
- Moses: *The Wanderer*
- Joshua: *Good Vibrations*
- Esau: *Born To Be Wild*
- Elijah: *Up, Up, and Away*
- Jezebel: *The Lady Is a Tramp*
- Samson: *Hair*
- Nebuchadnezzar: *Crazy*
- Jeremiah: *Take This Job and Shove It*
- Jonah: *Got a Whale of a Tale*
- Daniel: *The Lion Sleeps Tonight*
- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: *Great Balls of Fire! CF*