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# No Joke Making Jewish Humor Library Of Jewish Idea

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 The Cambridge History of Jewish American Literature  
 Jewish Comedy: A Serious History  
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## ANTONIO SHEPARD

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*The Big Book of Jewish Humor*  
 HarperCollins  
 Abe and his friend Sol are out for a walk together in a part of town they haven't been in before. Passing a Christian church, they notice a curious sign in front that says "\$1,000 to anyone who will convert." "I wonder what that's about," says Abe. "I think I'll go in and have a look. I'll be back in a minute; just wait for me." Sol sits on the sidewalk bench and waits patiently for nearly half an hour. Finally, Abe reappears. "Well," asks Sol, "what are they up to? Who are they trying to convert? Why do they care? Did you get the \$1,000?" Indignantly Abe replies, "Money. That's all

you people care about." Ted Cohen thinks that's not a bad joke. But he also doesn't think it's an easy joke. For a listener or reader to laugh at Abe's conversion, a complicated set of conditions must be met. First, a listener has to recognize that Abe and Sol are Jewish names. Second, that listener has to be familiar with the widespread idea that Jews are more interested in money than anything else. And finally, the listener needs to know this information in advance of the joke, and without anyone telling him or her. Jokes, in short, are complicated transactions in which communities are forged, intimacy is offered, and otherwise offensive stereotypes and cliches lose their sting—at least sometimes. *Jokes* is a book of jokes and a book about them. Cohen loves a good laugh, but as a philosopher, he is also interested in how jokes work, why

they work, and when they don't. The delight at the end of a joke is the result of a complex set of conditions and processes, and Cohen takes us through these conditions in a philosophical exploration of humor. He considers questions of audience, selection of joke topics, the ethnic character of jokes, and their morality, all with plenty of examples that will make you either chuckle or wince. *Jokes*: more humorous than other philosophy books, more philosophical than other humor books. "Befitting its subject, this study of jokes is . . . light, funny, and thought-provoking. . . . [T]he method fits the material, allowing the author to pepper the book with a diversity of jokes without flattening their humor as a steamroller theory might. Such a book is only as good as its jokes, and most of his are good. . . . [E]ntertainment and ideas in one

gossamer package."—Kirkus Reviews "One of the many triumphs of Ted Cohen's Jokes—apart from the not incidental fact that the jokes are so good that he doesn't bother to compete with them—is that it never tries to sound more profound than the jokes it tells. . . . [H]e makes you feel he is doing an unusual kind of philosophy. As though he has managed to turn J. L. Austin into one of the Marx Brothers. . . . Reading Jokes makes you feel that being genial is the most profound thing we ever do—which is something jokes also make us feel—and that doing philosophy is as natural as being amused."—Adam Phillips, London Review of Books "[A] lucid and jargon-free study of the remarkable fact that we divert each other with stories meant to make us laugh. . . . An illuminating study, replete with killer jokes."—Kevin McCardle, The Herald (Glasgow) "Cohen is an ardent joke-maker, keen to offer us a glimpse of how jokes are crafted and to have us dwell rather longer on their effects."—Barry C. Smith, Times Literary Supplement "Because Ted Cohen loves jokes, we come to appreciate them more, and perhaps think further about the quality of good humor and the appropriateness of laughter in our lives."—Steve Carlson, Christian Science Monitor

**The Cambridge History of Jewish American Literature** Purdue University Press

What makes a great Jewish book? In fact, what makes a book "Jewish" in the first place? Ruth R. Wisse eloquently fields these questions in *The Modern Jewish Canon*, her compassionate, insightful guide to the finest Jewish literature of the twentieth century. From Isaac Babel to Isaac Bashevis Singer, Elie Wiesel to Cynthia Ozick, Wisse's *The Modern Jewish Canon* is a book that every student of Jewish literature, and every reader of great fiction, will enjoy.

*Jewish Comedy: A Serious History* W. W. Norton & Company

From the host of NPR affiliate's Forum with Michael Krasny, a compendium of Jewish jokes that packs the punches with hilarious riff after riff and also offers a window into Jewish culture. Michael Krasny has been telling Jewish jokes since his bar mitzvah, and it's been said that he knows more of them than anyone on the planet. He certainly states his case in this wise, enlightening, and hilarious book that not only collects the best of Jewish humor passed down from generation to generation, but explains the cultural expressions and anxieties behind the laughs. "What's Jewish Alzheimer's?" "You forget everything but the grudges." "You

must be so proud. Your daughter is the President of the United States!" "Yes. But her brother is a doctor!" "Isn't Jewish humor masochistic?" "No. And if I hear that one more time I am going to kill myself." With his background as a scholar and public-radio host, Krasny delves deeply into the themes, topics, and form of Jewish humor: chauvinism undercut by irony and self-mockery, the fear of losing cultural identity through assimilation, the importance of vocal inflection in joke-telling, and calls to communal memory, including the use of Yiddish. Borrowing from traditional humor and such Jewish comedy legends as Jackie Mason, Mel Brooks, and Joan Rivers, Larry David, Sarah Silverman, Jerry Seinfeld and Amy Schumer, *Let There Be Laughter* is an absolute pleasure for the chosen and goyim alike.

**Old Jewish Comedians** William Morrow "Jesus saves. Moses invests." "Why spoil a good meal with a big tip?" "What did the Jewish mother ask her daughter when the daughter told her she had had an affair?—'Who catered it?' " "I've probably heard—and told—some of the jokes in this book a thousand times; more than a few are older than I am. Others were actually new to me. But I can't think of a good Jewish joke that isn't in this collection. Enjoy!" —Alan King The undisputed heavyweight champion of Jewish humor livens up the pages with a rich and comprehensive treasury of the all-time best Jewish jokes. From the Polish shtetls to vaudeville and the Catskills to modern Hollywood and comedy clubs across the country, Jewish humor hasn't just survived, it has become universally loved and often recited—by Jews and non-Jews alike. And who better to compile the best of Jewish humor than Alan King, the consummate comedian who has torn up every venue from the Friar's Club and Broadway to Comedy Central? In *Alan King's Great Jewish Joke Book*, King gathers old standards and hilarious new material, great one-liners and drop-dead funny stories, and packs them into a laugh-(or sometimes a groan-) out-loud celebration of the Jewish funny bone. So why is this book like chicken soup? Because it doesn't cure anything, but it sure can make you feel better! Or your money back, guaranteed. (Just kidding.) *An Anatomy of Humor* Princeton University Press

The first book on Jewish humor in which individual jokes are singled out for comprehensive study, *Life is Like a Glass of Tea* devotes a chapter to each of eight major jokes, tracing its history and variants—and looking closely at the ways in

which the comic behavior enacted in the punchline can be interpreted. One of the unique properties of classic Jewish jokes is their openness to radically different interpretive options (having nothing to do with wordplay or double entendre). This openness to alternate interpretations—never before discussed in the literature on Jewish humor—gives classic Jewish jokes their special flavor, as they leave us wondering which of several possible attitudes we are expected to hold toward the comic figure. An additional chapter is devoted to the ways in which Jewish jokes tend to evolve over time and across language and cultural barriers. Throughout the book, in fact, one can see the processes that Jewish jokes undergo over decades as their comic potential is unfolded in successive stages, and when they are transplanted from European to American soil. Now in its Second Edition, this expanded version adds two new chapters and new introductory material. It includes a 2015 Foreword by Marc Galanter, who notes that the author "is concerned not only with what makes jokes funny but with what makes some of them profound. His imaginative response to this puzzle makes this little book a distinctive and engaging contribution to the literature on Jewish jokes and on jokes generally." It will appeal to the general reader, as well as to readers especially interested in Jewish culture, the psychology of humor, religion, ethnography, and folklore. "Richard Raskin's book on Jewish humor was the most original and useful I found in years of research on the topic. I'm delighted to see it back in print—and with added chapters" - Ruth Wisse, Professor Emerita, Yiddish and Comparative Literature, Harvard University; Author, *No Joke: Making Jewish Humor* (2013) "A fascinating book that explores the richness of Jewish humor. Raskin offers a thought-provoking analysis of what makes Jewish humor special. Raskin merges an understanding of Jewish culture, fresh psychological insights, and a sophisticated reading of jokes and their evolution to create a gem of a book. However, it is not just an outstanding book on Jewish humor. It is an outstanding book on humor. Period. After reading it, you won't laugh the same way again." - Dov Cohen, Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Illinois; Co-editor, *Handbook of Cultural Psychology* (2007)"

**Life Is Like a Glass of Tea** Schocken Jews and humor is, for most people, a natural and felicitous collocation. In spite of, or perhaps because of, a history of crises and living on the edge, Jews have often created or resorted to humor. But

what is humor? And what makes certain types, instances, or performances of humor "Jewish"? These are among the myriad queries addressed by the fourteen authors whose essays are collected in this volume. And, thankfully, their observations, always apt and often witty, are expressed with a lightness of style and a depth of analysis that are appropriate to the many topics they cover. The scholars who contributed to this collection allow readers both to discern the common features that make up "Jewish humor" and to delight in the individualism and eccentricities of the many figures whose lives and accomplishments are narrated here. Because these essays are written in a clear, jargon-free style, they will appeal to everyone—even those who don't usually crack a smile!

**Truly Tasteless Jokes** Doubleday

A fundamental reassessment of the ways that racial policy worked and was understood under the Third Reich. Leading scholars explore race's function, content, and power in relation to society and nation, and above all, in relation to the extraordinary violence unleashed by the Nazis.

**Jewish Humor** Cambridge University Press

The *Genius of the Jewish Joke* focuses on what is distinctive and unusual about Jewish jokes and Jewish humor. Jewish humor is humor by Jews and about Jews, in whatever medium this humor is found. Jokes are defined as short stories, meant to amuse, with a punch line, though Jewish humor exists in many other forms—riddles, comic definitions, parodies—as well. The book makes a "radical" suggestion about the origin of Jewish humor—namely, that Sarah and Abraham's relation to God, and the name of their son Isaac (which, in Hebrew, means laughter), recognizes a special affinity in Jews for humor. Abraham does not sacrifice Isaac (humor) and, thus, humor and the Jews are linked early in Jewish history. Berger discusses techniques of humor and how they can be used to analyze jokes. He also compares "Old World Jewish Humor"—the humor of the shtetl, with its fabulous schlemiels, schlimazels, schnorrers, and other characters—and "New World Humor"—the humor of Jewish doctors, lawyers, accountants, and other professional types living mostly in the suburbs nowadays. Jewish humor is contrasted with other forms of ethnic humor, such as Polish jokes and Italian American jokes. This humor, in addition to providing pleasure, reveals a great deal about Jewish character and culture and, in addition, the

human condition. Now available with a new introduction by the author, *The Genius of the Jewish Joke* is an entertaining and informative inquiry into Jewish humor that explores its distinctiveness, its unique spirit, and its role in Jewish identity.

**Jokes** University of Chicago Press

From the comic genius behind *Curb Your Enthusiasm*—a play with "a perfect second-act twist, and a solid last-minute kicker" (*Vulture*). Fish in the Dark marked Seinfeld co-creator Larry David's playwriting debut, his Broadway debut—and his first time acting on stage since eighth grade. David starred as Norman Drexel, a man in his fifties who is average in most respects, except for his hyperactive libido. As Norman, his more successful brother Arthur, their elderly mother, and a host of other characters try to navigate the death of a loved one, old acquaintances and unsettled arguments resurface—with hilarious consequences.

**Zizek's Jokes** Vintage

Empire-critical and postcolonial readings of Revelation are now commonplace, but scholars have not yet put these views into conversation with Jewish trauma and cultural survival strategies. In this book, Sarah Emanuel positions Revelation within its ancient Jewish context. Proposing a new reading of Revelation, she demonstrates how the text's author, a first century CE Jewish Christ-follower, used humor as a means of resisting Roman power. Emanuel uses multiple critical lenses, including humor, trauma, and postcolonial theory, together with historical-critical methods. These approaches enable a deeper understanding of the Jewishness of the early Christ-centered movement, and how Jews in antiquity related to their cultural and religious identity. Emanuel's volume offers new insights and fills a gap in contemporary scholarship on Revelation and biblical scholarship more broadly.

**Old Jews Telling Jokes** Ballantine Books

The original is back. *TRULY TASTELESS JOKES* took America by storm and made it laugh at itself. It's all in here, disgusting, repulsive, cruel, and just plain tasteless jokes and stories that will make you smile, laugh, or groan—and love every minute of it.

**Jewish Wit** Cambridge University Press

Two rival businessmen meet in the Warsaw train station. "Where are you going?" says the first man. "To Minsk," says the second. "To Minsk, eh? What a nerve you have! I know you're telling me you're going to Minsk because you want me to think that you're really going to Pinsk. But it so happens that I know you

really are going to Minsk. So why are you lying to me?" Four men are walking in the desert. The German says, "I'm tired and thirsty. I must have a beer." The Italian says, "I'm tired and thirsty. I must have wine." The Mexican says, "I'm tired and thirsty. I must have tequila." The Jew says, "I'm tired and thirsty. I must have diabetes."

**Only Joking** Quid Pro Books

This comprehensive collection of portraiture of comedians born before 1930 includes the famous (Milton Berle, Groucho Marx, Jerry Lewis, Mel Brooks, Jack Benny), the not-so-famous (Benny Rubin, Shelly Berman) and the largely unknown (Al Kelly, Menasha Skulnik). The Reuben Award-winning Friedman presents a thorough visual history of these greatest Borscht-Belt comedians.

**Die Laughing** Crown

This is, quite simply, the most comprehensive collection of Jewish jokes, ever! The author has sourced over 1000 jokes and witty anecdotes that will have your sides splitting. With topics ranging from Rabbis to relationships; hairdressers to honeymoons; Bar Mitzvahs to bodybuilders; and from shopping, dating and in-laws to miracles, Viagra and chutzpah - and you don't have to be Jewish to enjoy them. This unique book also contains jokes for children, a compatibility test for dating couples, humorous quips that can be used in speeches for special occasions, and a generous sprinkling of naughtier jokes.

**Let There Be Laughter** Metro Publishing

From the acclaimed author of *The Man Without a Face*, the previously untold story of the Jews in twentieth-century Russia that reveals the complex, strange, and heart-wrenching truth behind the familiar narrative that begins with pogroms and ends with emigration. In 1929, the Soviet government set aside a sparsely populated area in the Soviet Far East for settlement by Jews. The place was called Birobidzhan. The idea of an autonomous Jewish region was championed by Jewish Communists, Yiddishists, and intellectuals, who envisioned a haven of post-oppression Jewish culture. By the mid-1930s tens of thousands of Soviet Jews, as well as about a thousand Jews from abroad, had moved there. The state-building ended quickly, in the late 1930s, with arrests and purges instigated by Stalin. But after the Second World War, Birobidzhan received another influx of Jews—those who had been dispossessed by the war. In the late 1940s a second wave of arrests and imprisonments swept through the area, traumatizing Birobidzhan's Jews into silence and

effectively shutting down most of the Jewish cultural enterprises that had been created. *Where the Jews Aren't* is a haunting account of the dream of Birobidzhan—and how it became the cracked and crooked mirror in which we can see the true story of the Jews in twentieth-century Russia. (Part of the Jewish Encounters series)

**Beyond the Racial State** BoD - Books on Demand

Humor permeates every aspect of society and has done so for thousands of years. People experience it daily through television, newspapers, literature, and contact with others. Rarely do social researchers analyze humor or try to determine what makes it such a dominating force in our lives. The types of jokes a person enjoys contribute significantly to the definition of that person as well as to the character of a given society. Arthur Asa Berger explores these and other related topics in *An Anatomy of Humor*. He shows how humor can range from the simple pun to complex plots in Elizabethan plays. Berger examines a number of topics ethnicity, race, gender, politics each with its own comic dimension. Laughter is beneficial to both our physical and mental health, according to Berger. He discerns a multiplicity of ironies that are intrinsic to the analysis of humor. He discovers as much complexity and ambiguity in a cartoon, such as Mickey Mouse, as he finds in an important piece of literature, such as Huckleberry Finn. *An Anatomy of Humor* is an intriguing and enjoyable read for people interested in humor and the impact of popular and mass culture on society. It will also be of interest to professionals in communication and psychologists concerned with the creative process.

*No Joke* MIT Press

The story of Izzy, a New York street player in the aftermath of World War II. A former boxer and ex-GI with a head full of shrapnel he lives off a disability pension, augmenting it with his concertina. A philosopher and a ladies' man, Izzy dazzles them with his Jewish jokes and his songs. The novel recreates the ambiance of the

1940s.

*The Ultimate Book of Jewish Jokes*

Schocken

Žižek as comedian: jokes in the service of philosophy. "A serious and good philosophical work could be written consisting entirely of jokes."—Ludwig Wittgenstein The good news is that this book offers an entertaining but enlightening compilation of Žižekisms. Unlike any other book by Slavoj Žižek, this compact arrangement of jokes culled from his writings provides an index to certain philosophical, political, and sexual themes that preoccupy him. *Žižek's Jokes* contains the set-ups and punch lines—as well as the offenses and insults—that Žižek is famous for, all in less than 200 pages. So what's the bad news? There is no bad news. There's just the inimitable Slavoj Žižek, disguised as an impossibly erudite, politically incorrect uncle, beginning a sentence, "There is an old Jewish joke, loved by Derrida..." For Žižek, jokes are amusing stories that offer a shortcut to philosophical insight. He illustrates the logic of the Hegelian triad, for example, with three variations of the "Not tonight, dear, I have a headache" classic: first the wife claims a migraine; then the husband does; then the wife exclaims, "Darling, I have a terrible migraine, so let's have some sex to refresh me!" A punch line about a beer bottle provides a Lacanian lesson about one signifier. And a "truly obscene" version of the famous "aristocrats" joke has the family offering a short course in Hegelian thought rather than a display of unspeakables. *Žižek's Jokes* contains every joke cited, paraphrased, or narrated in Žižek's work in English (including some in unpublished manuscripts), including different versions of the same joke that make different points in different contexts. The larger point being that comedy is central to Žižek's seriousness.

*Life is Like a Glass of Tea* Routledge

Britain's hottest young comedian presents a seriously funny, up-close look at joking matters—from the social origins of laughter, to the art and craft of humor, to why we can never remember the punch

line—featuring over 300 jokes. As the host of the hit game show *Distraction* (now in its third season on Comedy Central) and one of the premier stand-up acts working today, award-winning comedian Jimmy Carr has won over millions of fans around the world with his trademark rapier wit, laced with "exquisitely economical and perfectly timed one-liners" (*The Guardian*). For this book he teams up with friend and fellow comedy writer Lucy Greeves to take an in-depth look at where humor comes from and how it works, through exploring its purest form: the joke. *Only Joking* begins with the mechanism of laughter—how it happens and why even infants do it—then delves into the power of the punch line, exploring the basics of all jokes, from the use of shock and surprise to advanced stand-up techniques such as the "pull-back/reveal." Carr and Greeves go on to explore taboo humor, jokes that bomb, and the psychology of finding something funny. They look into the long-standing connection between politics and humor, and discuss the survival prospects for contentious jokes in the current political climate. Throughout the book they conjure up a supporting cast of colorful joke enthusiasts, from Sigmund Freud to Lenny Bruce, and discuss their influence on the jokes we tell today. Surveying across national, ethnic, and gender divides, this rollicking analysis of why joking will always be close to the human heart is an irresistible exploration of humor that makes clear why we need a good laugh now more than ever.

**Joking Asides** University of Chicago Press

Here are more than 100 of the best Jewish jokes you'll ever hear, interspersed with perceptive and persuasive insight into what they can tell us about how Jews see themselves, their families, and their friends, and what they think about money, sex, and success. Rabbi Joseph Telushkin is as celebrated for his wit as for his scholarship, and in this immensely entertaining book, he displays both in equal measure. Stimulating, something stinging, and always very, very funny, *Jewish Humor* offers a classic portrait of the Jewish collective unconscious.