



Encyclopedia of Jewish Humor: From Biblical Times to the Modern Age

Henry D. Spalding

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Jewish humor mirrors the minds and hearts of the Jewish people. It reflects their joys and sorrows, hopes and disappointments. Perhaps most significant, it demonstrates their willingness to poke fun at themselves, which has no doubt enabled Jews to endure centuries of hardship with head held high and a smile on their collective face.

In the Encyclopedia of Jewish Humor, hailed as a landmark work when first published, Henry D. Spalding presents delightful anecdotes, quips, jokes, and yarns featuring the colorful folk who have added spice and spirit to Jewish life from biblical to modern times. Some of the selections are pungent, many are scornful of deceit and pretense, others are alive with brotherhood. Most are just downright hilarious.

In thirty-nine chapters, Spalding allows forty centuries of Jewish life to speak through characters we have all grown to love. Here, you'll find the itinerant shnorrer who arrives in a small Lithuanian town late one Friday afternoon with no place to stay; the Yiddishe papa whose task it is to instruct little Mortie in the ways of the birds and bees; the congregant whose life's goal, it seems, is to make his rabbi miserable; the hypochondriac who complains of ailments as yet undiscovered. The author (re)introduces us to the shlemiels and shlimazls, rebbes and rebbetzins, mamas and papas, doctors and patients, marriage brokers and divorce lawyers, yeshiva students and sisterhood presidents whose peculiar antics never fail to entertain.

In the preface to this classic work, Henry Spalding writes that the surest way to destroy humor is to analyze it. So no more analyzing...Now it's time to read a little something!



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