

Religions - Judaism Quiz

Jewish Humour

'Jewish Humour' looks at jokes and laughter!

Jewish humour is very much rooted in diverse traditions and is viewed by many as being difficult to define. It is sometimes proud, full of joy and yet at the same time can be marked with a great degree of self-deprecation, pathos, poignancy and plenty of irony. And as with most things Jewish, it can at times be complex and totally mystifying.



1. Jewish people have seen humour in their lives for thousands of years! Even the Bible (Old Testament) tells of...

- Moses laughing when he was told to collect the Ten Commandments
- Sarah laughing when told she'd have a child
- King Herod laughing heartily at the court jester
- Joseph laughing at the first fitting for his 'Technicolor' coat

2. Many Jewish comedians are noted for their very droll and often dry, Jewish life-observance style.

For example, on marriage, Groucho Marx said "Marry me and I'll never look at another horse". This style is often described as...

- seminal
- funny 'ha ha'
- self-deprecating
- insulting

3. Which of these themes is commonly addressed in Jewish humour?

- Anti-Semitism
- Poverty
- The immigrant experience
- Neurotics on New York's Upper West Side

4. Which Jewish person famously said “Anyone who is meshuga (Yiddish word for ‘mad’) enough to call himself a Jew, is a Jew”?

- The rather vocal American comedienne Joan Rivers
- Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion
- English singer Amy Winehouse
- American singer Pink

5. Mel Gordon, a professor of theatre arts at the University of California, Berkeley claims that Jewish humour was ‘officially’ born in...

- 1066 at the Battle of Hastings
- 1215 at the signing of the Magna Carta
- 1415 at Agincourt
- 1661 and the Chmielnicki massacres in the Ukraine

6. Approximately what percentage of American Jewish people consider having a sense of humour to be an essential part of being Jewish?

- 10%
- 26%
- 33%
- 42%

7. When the highly talented and respected comedian, singer and dancer Sammy Davis Junior died in 1990...

- an entire chapter of the racist Klu Klux Klan was arrested for celebrating the death of a black man who also happened to be Jewish
- the neon lights of the famous Las Vegas Strip were darkened for ten minutes in tribute
- a one-man show in which he was due to appear in Seattle went ahead despite his absence
- Eddie Murphy, Billy Crystal, Garrett Morris, Jim Carey and Tim Meadows who have all impersonated him on

8. The most famous Jewish hip-hop rapping group of all time is considered to be...

Beastie Boys

The Fugees

Public Enemy

Run-DMC stage or TV, sang at his funeral

9. A very surprising Jewish celebrity wrote a book of Jewish jokes that was very well received. Who was it?

Former film director and restaurant critic Michael Winner

Politician and former government minister Edwina Currie

Actor and Star Trek's Mr Spock, Leonard Nimoy

British businessman, Lord Alan Sugar

10. The most prolific, stand-up comedian in television history is still reckoned to be...

Jack Benny

Jerry Lewis

Jack Carter

Mel Brooks

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1. Jewish people have seen humour in their lives for thousands of years! Even the Bible (Old Testament) tells of...

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Her son Isaac, a Jewish biblical forefather, was named as a result of that laughter

2. Many Jewish comedians are noted for their very droll and often dry, Jewish "life observance" style. For example, on marriage, Groucho Marx said "Marry me and I'll never look at another horse". This style is often described as...

- seminal
- funny 'ha ha'
- self-deprecating
- insulting

Jewish humour has often been described as self-deprecating, as Jews have an ability to laugh at their own lives, obsessions and weaknesses, while at the same time allowing others to join in the humour as well. It is only when jokes are openly anti-Semitic that Jews take offence

3. Which of these themes is commonly addressed in Jewish humour?

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Much Jewish humour acts as a shield against anti-Semitic stereotypes by exploiting them first before they exploit Jews, including the mocking of negative Jewish stereotypes. It often takes the form of self-deprecating comments on Jewish culture

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David Ben-Gurion was Israel's first Prime Minister with the honour of being named as one of Time magazine's 100 Most Important People of the 20th century. Despite being a very serious man, overseeing many of the early important projects needed to develop the fledgling Israel, he had quite a sense of humour

5. Mel Gordon, a professor of theatre arts at the University of California, Berkeley claims that Jewish humour was ‘officially’ born in...

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1215 at the signing of the Magna Carta

1415 at Agincourt

1661 and the Chmielnicki massacres in the Ukraine

Professor Gordon claims that as a result of the nearly 100,000 Jews that were slaughtered throughout Ukraine by Bohdan Chmielnicki and his roving bands of Cossacks in 1661 when the “badkhn”, a type of rather cruel jester in European Jewish life at the time, was spared because of his extremely deprecating and politically incorrect (as far as the Jewish communities of the day were concerned!) style towards fellow Jews

6. Approximately what percentage of American Jewish people consider having a sense of humour to be an essential part of being Jewish?

10%

26%

33%

42%

An astonishing four out of ten Jews in America, according to the non-partisan fact tank, the Pew Research Centre in Washington, think having a sense of humour is more important than being religious

7. When the highly talented and respected comedian, singer and dancer Sammy Davis Junior died in 1990...

an entire chapter of the racist Klu Klux Klan was arrested for celebrating the death of a black man who also happened to be Jewish

the neon lights of the famous Las Vegas Strip were darkened for ten minutes in tribute

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Eddie Murphy, Billy Crystal, Garrett Morris, Jim Carey and Tim Meadows who have all impersonated him on stage or TV, sang at his funeral

Samuel George Davis, Junior was born in the Harlem, New York City, an only child, to Sammy Davis, Senior who was an African American entertainer, and Elvera Sanchez who was a tap dancer of Afro-Cuban descent. He converted to Judaism in 1961 following a very serious motor accident where he lost an eye, and was the first African American invited to sleep in the White House by President Richard Nixon in 1973

8. The most famous Jewish hip-hop rapping group of all time is considered to be...

Beastie Boys

The Fugees

Public Enemy

Run-DMC

Adam "MCA" Yauch, Michael "Mike D" Diamond and Adam "Ad-Rock" Horovitz formed the Beastie Boys in New York in 1981 in essence, it is said, for a "laugh" at the expense of the musical establishment. However, they went on to win several Grammy and MTV awards. Their number 1 "Licensed to Ill" became the best-selling rap album of the 1980s and the fourth "(You Gotta) Fight for Your Right (To Party!)" single from it continues to receive extensive airplay today. In 2012, Adam Yauch died from cancer at the age of 47

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Michael Winner's "Hymie Joke Book" was published by The Robson Press in 2012. He was famed for directing action films, most notable being two of the "Death Wish" series featuring Charles Bronson. Following a successful film director career and his establishment of the Police Memorial Trust after WPC Yvonne Fletcher was murdered in 1984, he became restaurant critic for the Sunday Times, and over the course of 20 years scared many a restaurant owner with his rather outspoken reviews

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Relatively unknown to British viewers, the Brooklyn born comedian Jack Carter (born Jack Chakrin) was well-known for his fast paced comedic style, working non-stop from the mid-1940s on a phenomenal number of TV (and stage shows as well as in films), to today, where in his 90s, he provides voice-overs for the Family Guy cartoon series