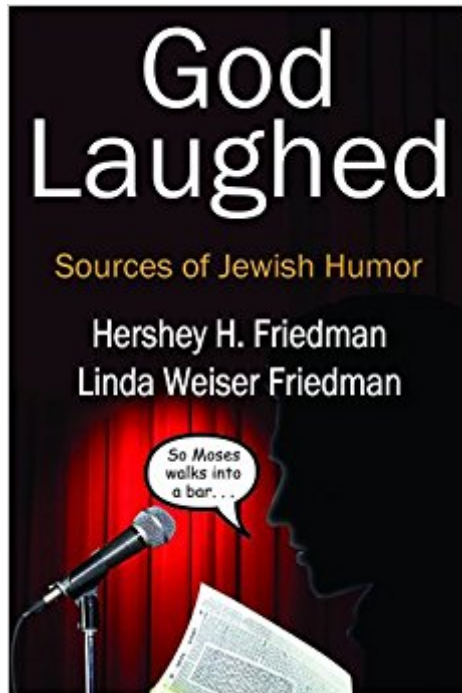




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God Laughed: Sources Of Jewish Humor (Jewish Studies)



Synopsis

Humor has had a profound effect on the way the Jewish people see the world, and has sustained them through millennia of hardships and suffering. *God Laughed* reviews, organizes, and categorizes the humor of the ancient Jewish texts—the Hebrew Bible, the Talmud, and Midrash—in a clear, readable, and accessible manner. These works have influenced the Jewish people in many ways, and all are replete with humor and wit. Inevitably, this oeuvre of Jewish humor has itself influenced generations of comics, as well as genres of humor. The authors use examples of Biblical humor from several broad categories, including irony, sarcasm, wordplay, humorous names, humorous imagery, and humorous situations. Because their primary purpose is not to entertain, but to teach humanity how to live the ideal life, much of the humor in the Talmud and the Midrash has a single purpose: to demonstrate that evil is wrong and even, at times, ludicrous. This may help explain why approximately 1,500 years after its closing, the Talmud is still such a fascinating work. *God Laughed* is the latest addition to Transaction's Jewish Studies series.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars — See all reviews (6 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

Wow! I wouldn't have thought it possible: a book that's fun, funny, and in the end, a breathtaking window into the depths of one of the world's oldest religions. That's right — this is not just about some recent turns in Jewish ethnic history, whether they run through the Borscht Belt or the LA sets of *Seinfeld* and *Curb* — though it gets there, too. Instead, the authors show that

today's Jewish comics are, in fact, heir to a millennia-old tradition of capturing ultimate (and even mundane) truths with humor, even when that means making fun of God Himself, who, we find out, enjoys a good laugh as much as the rest of us. Of course, this is not a work of earnest piety; the authors treated me to a delicious taste of the wicked ironies that prophets, Talmudists and rabbinic authorities wrought when they tried, with imagination that verged on insanity, to understand the God they so revered. In the end, this book shows just how such irreverence can be religious after all, even as religion is exposed to be, at times, deeply and brilliantly irreverent. A must, must read!!

Erudite, informative, fun. What else could one ask for? I've already half-read it, half skimmed, and will settle down on a rainy day sometime to read it cover-to-cover. Firm impression: Great book.

This is an outstanding and well written publication which is a jewel. I encourage Harvard Alumni friends and colleagues to add this important work to their Ethics library and am 100% in agreement with the following review by Professor Helmreich, *God Laughed* is a brilliant analysis of a fascinating aspect of the Talmud that demonstrates its universality and timeless appeal. The authors have produced a work that is ingenious, witty, and truly original and which will appeal to all those interested in religious studies, Judaica, and intellectual history.

— William Helmreich, City University of New York Graduate Center and City College of New York.

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