

 **The Schmooze**  
**Stories with a Yiddish Twist**

## **“TSVANTSIK” (20) YEARS OF JUDGE JUDY**

*by*  
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Judge Judy premiered on Sept. 16, 1996. This September she celebrates her 20th year on television. In addition, she has created another show called “Hot Bench.” It’s similar to her own show, but they use a three-judge panel.

Judy wears a “vays” (white) lace collar. It perks up her face and is also a bit disarming for litigants. She could picture them thinking: “That nice little lady with the lace collar sitting behind the bench couldn’t hurt a fly (“flig”).” The litigant should leave the courtroom “Vos gicher alts besser” -- the faster the better.

On Nov. 26, 2002, Joseph Wapner (“The People’s Court”) criticized Sheindlin’s courtroom behavior. He said, “She is a disgrace to the profession. She does things I don’t think a judge should do. She tells people to shut up (“farmach dos moyl!”). She’s rude (“grob”). She’s arrogant. She demeans people. If she does this on purpose, then that’s even worse. Judges need to observe certain standards of conduct. She just doesn’t do it and I resent that. The public is apt to gain the impression that this is how actual judges conduct themselves. It says ‘judge’ on the nameplate on the bench and she’s wearing a robe.”

In November, 2013, in an interview with Larry King, Sheindlin was asked whether or not she enjoyed watching Wapner on The People’s Court. She replied, “Meh! Oatmeal!” [Note: Sheindlin did enjoy watching Mills Lane of Judge Mills Lane.]

“Der komiker” (comic), Freddie Roman [about Judge Judy and Judge Jerry Sheindlin], “Wonderful two judges are married. When she’s ready she tells him he may approach the bench.”

Judge Judy told a 19-year-old man who did not seem to be exerting himself to support his children: “You have made two babies. There have to be other parts of your body (“guf”) that work, sir.” [The audience chortled.]

Judge Judy tends to sprinkle her statements with words that are obviously Yiddish. Some examples:

- . “chutzpah” (unmitigated gall)
- . “kvetch” (complain about petty things)
- . “tchotchka” (bric-a-brac, knick-knacks)
- . “tsuris” (aggravation)
- . “forbinisa”/“farbissener” (bitter person)

Sheindlin wrote: “Oh no. Oh no. You’re responsible for your own. You could have the best mate, the best family, the best kids in the world, and you can walk around. You know the Yiddish “forbisina”? You know, like an unhappy miserable person? There are people like that, because they lament that--so and so has house that’s nicer than theirs, and Sadie has a nicer fur coat, and somebody has a nicer ring than you do. They’re unhappy that their child only became a lawyer and somebody else’s became a doctor, you know. So you create your own happiness.”

And, when hearing a claim about petty things, she referred to it as a “tchotchka.”

Judge Judy told the media at the St. Regis Hotel that she doesn’t mind that her husband will get a TV rival. “But,” she added, “I want him to get used to being No. 2 [in the ratings]. Re: competition: She said, “There is no competition. We’re both supposed to have a good time.”

Does Judy know this Yiddish proverb: “Ven tsvai shpilen, muz ainer gevinen un ainer farliren.” (When two play a game, there must be a winner and a loser.)

Judy writes, "Today, living together is common. Even so, you'd be surprised how many times young women quote the adage "Why buy the cow when you can get the milk for free?"

What are some of the common expressions/Judyisms used on TV?

- . "There are two kinds of people in the world: Ulcer givers and ulcer getters." (Note: The Yiddish word for "ulcer" is "mogn-geshvir.")
- . "I being in your position would never humiliate myself in front of 10 million people." (The Yiddish words meaning "to humiliate" is "mevayesh zayn.")
- . "Put on your listening ears!!"  
Often used in conjunction with "God gave you two ears and one mouth for a reason."
- . [to people who come to her courtroom dressed in an extremely informal manner]: "Dress like a funeral, because it is. Yours.
- . "Um' is not an answer."
- . "Are you trying to talk over me? You're not gonna talk over me. You know why? They can turn off your mike and leave mine on."
- . "This is my playpen."
- . "Liar, liar, pants on fire."
- . "Listen to me: You are an outrageous person."
- . "You mess around with me, young lady, I'll wipe the floor with you. We follow each other?" Or, "Tsi farshtait ir?" (Do you understand?)
- . "I don't care how you feel. If you want to talk about your feelings, go to Dr. Phil."  
Note: "A deigeh hob ich" means "I don't give a care. I don't give a hang."
- . "You ate the steak."  
Note: The Yiddish word for "steak" is "bifsteyk."
- . "I'm like a truth machine. Someone starts to lie and the hairs on the

back of my neck stand up.”

- “Beauty fades, dumb is forever.”

Note: The word for “beautiful” is “shain.” A “dumbbell” is a “dumkop.” The Yiddish word for “forever” is “oyf eybik.”

- “I can’t stand stupid, and I can’t stand slow.”

(She has zero tolerance for their idiocy.)

- Judy exudes skepticism at someone’s testimony. She warns that she has

an infallible nose for fakery. She has said, “Please, give me a break. What are you, stupid?” Or, “That is probably the dumbest thing I ever heard of.”

- Judy can be shrill. Once she hollered at a talkative woman whose testimony she doubted: “You’re full of baloney. Why don’t you stop running at the mouth (“mohl”)?”

Note: The Yiddish expression, “Az di vort iz in moil, iz men a har; az me lozt zi arois, iz men a nar.” (While the word is still in your mouth, you are a lord; once you utter it, you are a fool.) And, “Az me shveigt iz men a halber nar; az me redt iz men a gantser nar.” (He who keeps quiet is half a fool; he who talks is a complete fool.)

- “People are fed up with excuses for bad behavior. I say what they want to say. I beat up the bad guy.”

Note: A “bad person”--someone capable of evil--is a “vos-in-der-kort” (lit., represents every bad card in the deck).

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MARJORIE WOLFE’S favorite lines from “What Would Judy Say? Grown-Up Guide to Living Together With Benefits,” by Judge Judy Sheindlin:

“Beware the man who says, ‘What’s the rush?’ Beware the man who says, ‘It’s just a piece of paper.’ Beware the man with the hot, young personal trainer.”

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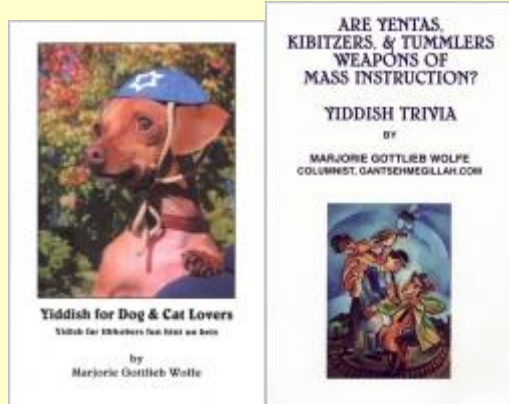
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**Marjorie Gottlieb Wolfe is the author of two books:**



**"Yiddish for Dog & Cat Lovers" and "Are Yentas, Kibitzers, & Tumblers Weapons of Mass Instruction? Yiddish Trivia." To order a copy, go to her website: [MarjorieGottliebWolfe.com](http://MarjorieGottliebWolfe.com)**

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