

Houdini: The Elusive American Jewish Lives

Harry Houdini, born Erik Weisz, was a Hungarian-American illusionist and stunt performer who is best known for his escape acts. He was born in Budapest, Hungary, on March 24, 1874, to a Jewish family. His father, Mayer Samuel Weisz, was a rabbi, and his mother, Cecilia Steiner, was a housewife. Houdini had two older brothers, Nathan and Herman, and a younger sister, Gladys.

Houdini's family emigrated to the United States in 1878, when he was four years old. They settled in Appleton, Wisconsin, where Houdini attended public school. He began his career as a magician at the age of 12, when he performed at a local variety show. He adopted the stage name "Houdini" in 1891, after the French magician Jean Eugène Robert-Houdin.



Houdini: The Elusive American (Jewish Lives)

by Adam Begley

★★★★☆ 4.4 out of 5

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Houdini quickly gained a reputation for his daring escape acts. He escaped from handcuffs, straitjackets, and even a locked safe. He also performed

dangerous stunts, such as jumping off a bridge into a river and being buried alive. Houdini's popularity grew throughout the world, and he became one of the most famous entertainers of his time.

In addition to his career as a magician, Houdini was also a strong advocate for the Jewish community. He was a member of the B'nai B'rith, a Jewish service organization, and he donated money to Jewish charities. He also spoke out against anti-Semitism.

Houdini died on October 31, 1926, at the age of 52, from peritonitis caused by a ruptured appendix. He was buried in Machpelah Cemetery in Queens, New York. Houdini's legacy lives on through his many books, films, and television shows. He is considered one of the greatest magicians of all time.

Houdini's Jewish Identity

Houdini was a proud Jew, and his Jewish identity was an important part of his life. He was raised in a traditional Jewish home, and he attended synagogue regularly. He also spoke Yiddish fluently.

Houdini's Jewish identity influenced his career in many ways. He often used Jewish themes in his magic acts, and he sometimes performed at Jewish events. He also used his platform to speak out against anti-Semitism.

In 1918, Houdini helped to found the American Jewish Committee, an organization dedicated to fighting anti-Semitism and promoting Jewish rights. He also served as president of the Jewish Theatrical Guild of America.

Houdini's Jewish identity was not always easy. He faced anti-Semitism throughout his life, and he was sometimes criticized for being too Jewish. However, he never wavered in his commitment to his faith.

Houdini's Legacy

Houdini's legacy is immense. He is considered one of the greatest magicians of all time, and his escape acts continue to amaze audiences today. He was also a strong advocate for the Jewish community, and his work helped to fight anti-Semitism and promote Jewish rights.

Houdini's legacy lives on through his many books, films, and television shows. He is also the subject of numerous biographies and documentaries. Houdini's story is a reminder of the power of the human spirit, and his work continues to inspire people around the world.

Further Reading

- The Houdini Museum
- Harry Houdini
- Houdini: A Biography



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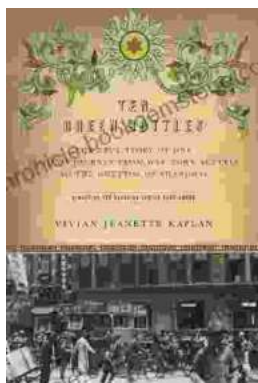
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