

Genesis Ale: our first creation; Messiah Bold: the one you've been waiting for; Bittersweet Lenny's R.I.P.A. (a posthumous tribute to Jewish American comedian Lenny Bruce, who was arrested on charges of obscenity in 1961): brewed with an obscene amount of malts & hops.

And the shtick just keeps on coming. He'brew is, naturally, "the chosen beer," and Shmaltz reminds its customers that "exile never tasted so good," "thou shalt covet this" and "don't pass out, pass over."

Cowan's humor is more than just a marketing ploy. "When I started

the company," he says, "my goal was to bring Jewish humor and irreverence together with Jewish content to create a contemporary product that would allow Jews of all types to access a high quality product and celebrate their culture."

The names and content of He'brew's beers are teeming with symbolism from Jewish scripture and tradition. And humor is an important part of that tradition: Religion and humor may seem just as mismatched as religion and beer, but He'brew links both with surprisingly good taste.

Putting Judaism at the forefront of He'brew was Cowan's goal from the beginning. He says that now, most people "get it," although "at first it was a little shocking for some-

one to see a giant dancing rabbi holding up beer bottles. All other Jewish products are discrete with maybe a small star or K on the label, so I took the opposite approach."

Cowan pairs his beer's saucy style with a genuine

dedication to the promotion of Jewish culture in America. Shmaltz has sponsored events like New York City's inaugural Jewish Music and Heritage Festival and donates beer to many Jewish events around the country each year. And Cowan himself regularly takes time out of his breakneck He'brew promotion to speak to Jewish civic groups all over the US.

He'brew's shtick may be funny, but critics are seriously impressed. To name just a few of critics' hymns of praise: Bittersweet Lenny's R.I.P.A. was awarded Best International Ale at the Calgary Beer Festival, while *Beer Advocate* rhapsodized that it "makes your heart skip a

beat." Charlie Papazian, president of the Association of Homebrewers, calls Messiah Bold "a testament to the craft of the brewmaster, kosher or not." Rejewvenator is a hit, too. Fruit infused beers can be too sweet for some, but He'brew's latest offering strikes a good balance.

"You can taste the fig flavor, but it doesn't overwhelm," says Mad Dog of The Bier Stein in Eugene, Oregon, a German-style beer house with more than 900 brews available. "It's a great seasonal to have on the market now."

Naturally, Israel is on Cowan's mind. Craft beer is hardly a booming industry in the Holy Land, but microbreweries like Dancing Camel in Tel Aviv are enjoying modest success. Cowan, just back from London, is finishing up a deal to begin selling He'brew in the United Kingdom, which he hopes will open up the rest of Europe; currently, He'brew is available only in parts of the US and Canada. Although he has no concrete plans to begin He'brew's exodus to Israel yet, he says he is contacted constantly by specialty food distributors and people who think it's only natural that He'brew be available in the world's only Jewish state. "I know it will happen eventually, but I've had a tough time keeping up with demand in the US," he says, and cites a heavy import tax as another stumbling block.

But keep the faith, beer fans. Put your trust in Jeremy Cowan, and you need not remain enslaved to the same old uninspired suds. Shmaltz's He'brew will lead you to delicious freedom. L'chaim! ■

*He'brew is making believers out of beer aficionados and novices alike*



Many He'brew fans are first tempted not by good reviews but simply by the shtick. The name He'brew started off as a gag, when Cowan was in high school and joked with his friends that the Jews should have their own beer. The spirit of humor remained when He'brew became a reality years later. Many of He'brew's bottles sport bold labels featuring a grinning, bottle-brandishing hassidic rabbi. Cowan pairs the images with wickedly witty names and slogans for each variety of brew -