In the 2000 Year Old Man sketches, comedy legend Mel Brooks plays the oldest man in the world, interviewed by fellow comedy legend Carl Reiner. It’s a classic comedy routine that began as a way for the two best friends to entertain friends at dinner parties, where Brooks would ad lib answers to questions on everything from the creation of fire to Paul Revere’s midnight ride, the discovery of women (“it was Bernie who discovered the female”) to the perfection of a nectarine, riffing on historical figures (“Marie Antoinette? What a cutie!”), marriage, popular culture – anything straight man Reiner threw his way. It is a routine that, as comic Paul Reiser notes appropriately in the new public television special *Mel Brooks & Carl Reiner: Excavating the 2000 Year Old Man,* “never gets old” – with an unmatched impact on American comedy.

In an exchange between the comedy legends as themselves, recorded in 2009, Brooks and Reiner recall the genesis of their friendship and the development of the routine that resembled, as described in the program, two great musicians jamming. George Burns threatened to steal the routine. Edward G. Robinson wanted to turn it into a play. But it was Steve Allen who convinced Brooks and Allen to make a recording of the shtick they insisted was “just for friends.”

*Excavating the 2000 Year Old Man* highlights some of the best performances of Brooks and Reiner’s often improvised exchanges as originally seen live on *The New Steve Allen Show, The Andy Williams Show, The Ed Sullivan Show, The Timex All-Star Comedy Hour,* and in a 1975 cartoon special, but also digs deeper into this classic comedic cornerstone as a single source of inspiration for some of today’s biggest names in comedy, a primer on how to do comedy, and one of the specific roots of Jewish humor’s impact on American
culture. Comedians Bob Newhart, Paul Reiser, Garry Shandling and Richard Lewis; Leonard Stern, executive producer of Brooks’ television creation *Get Smart*; and Rabbi David Wolpe of Sinai Temple in Los Angeles, as well as Brooks and Reiner themselves, celebrate the magical chemistry of the Grammy Award-winning comedic interactions of these two men and what it has meant to the larger culture.


### About WNET

New York’s WNET is America’s flagship public media outlet, bringing quality arts, education and public affairs programming to over 5 million viewers each week. The parent company of public television stations THIRTEEN and WLIW21 and operator of NJTV, WNET produces and presents such acclaimed PBS series as Nature, Great Performances, American Masters, Need to Know, Charlie Rose, Tavis Smiley and a range of documentaries, children’s programs, and local news and cultural offerings available on air and online. Pioneers in educational programming, WNET has created such groundbreaking series as Get the Math, Noah Comprende and Cyberchase and provides tools for educators that bring compelling content to life in the classroom and at home. WNET highlights the tri-state’s unique culture and diverse communities through NYC-ARTS, Reel 13, *NJ Today* and the new online newsmagazine MetroFocus.