



**COLLEGE  
COMMONS**

DR. DORIS E. COHEN: DÉJÀ JEW

**Joshua Holo:** Welcome to the College Commons podcast. Passionate perspectives from Judaism's leading thinkers, brought to you by the Hebrew Union College Jewish Institute of Religion, America's first Jewish institution of higher learning. My name is Joshua Holo, dean of HUC's Jack H. Skirball campus in Los Angeles, and your host.

**JH:** It is my great pleasure to welcome Dr. Doris E. Cohen, to this episode of the college Commons Podcast. Dr. Cohen is an author, clinical psychologist and psychic and she's an internationally renowned clinical psychologist and psychotherapist who's been in private practice for over 30 years. Her unique approach uses psychotherapy, hypnotherapy, past life regressions and dream analysis. Dr Cohen, thank you for joining us, it's a pleasure to have you.

**Doris E. Cohen:** Oh, it's my pleasure to participate.

**JH:** Before we dive into your work, can you give us a brief sketch of your Jewish identity?

**DC:** I am very Jewish, is how I usually put it. My family is Sephardic Jews. So with Sephardic Jews, they are in the divisions of reformed, conservative and orthodox. But my father was very observant, so I grew up in a very observant Jewish home and one of the things that I've always loved about growing up so Jewish was my father loved the holidays. He would regal and at Pesach he would sit back and say, "Let us all sit back and enjoy. We're not slaves anymore. We are masters, we are grateful to God for all we have." And I learned from my father, which is a very Jewish thing because the first prayer of the day, typically for us Jews is Ani Modeh, I am thankful.

**DC:** My father would express gratitude, and thanks with everything, all the challenges that we have, and all the blessings that we were fortunate enough to have and life was very difficult because I come originally from Egypt, my father believed in being the wandering Jew, so we kept changing countries from place to place to place but very Jewish, and I embraced Judaism. When I first started doing work with past lives, I was very concerned because I wasn't sure... Is that acceptable in Judaism? What is it? Only to find out that in fact in Kabbalah, Jewish mysticism there are even terms that not only acknowledge but describe and explore past lives and why a soul will choose to come and reincarnate over and over lifetime after lifetime to do Tikkun, which means correction, to grow and bring more light to this world. So I'm very Jewish... What I love about Judaism is that it's so practical and down to earth and yet so amazingly attesting.

**JH:** Oh, it's very beautiful. Thank you.

**DC:** Oh, thank you.

**JH:** So there are lots of questions that even a brief introduction to your biography, is as I think in the mind of many listeners, but before we ask the questions, I wanna give you an opportunity to describe your work so I want you to start with the categories of your work that are most likely to be unfamiliar to Jewish listeners, or downright challenging or off-putting based on their preconceived notions.

**DC:** Okay, from the very beginning, I'm trained very formally, scientifically, I have a PhD, I did research during my training and so forth, so everything was very kosher and very proper in my training as a psychologist and when I started doing therapy, therapy is interacting verbally, and giving consulting and counselling, to people who are depressed, or anxious, or troubled, or confused, in order to have them deal with life more effectively. The primary thing that was missing solely in my training was access and understanding of the unconscious. The unconscious is those aspects of selves and our experiences that we are not consciously aware of... Most people are not aware of why they are doing what they're doing, why they have the feelings that they have, and how to manage them or change them. When I started looking into aspects of the unconscious, that's what opened all the doors, to begin to do work that was really ultimately a new work, going beyond the regular therapy.

**JH:** Forgive me for interrupting, but my first reaction is actually surprise. Because in my mind, traditional western psychotherapeutic training is a lot about the unconscious.

**DC:** Maybe psycho-analysis has that approach, not regular psychology, not academic psychology, not typical psychology or psychotherapy as it's described and has been for decades, for the last 30-40 years is cognitive behavior therapy, you define the problem, and then you talk about it a little and it's only like a few sessions. The other extreme is psychoanalysis, which I don't know the kind of language I can use here necessarily but I've always considered psycho-analysis as being not an acceptable approach because it's not practical enough, it's not helpful enough and people are not given tools to make the changes realistically, you see, so I have never...

**JH:** So it's not therapeutic enough is what you're saying it's a...

**DC:** I have never cared for it. I've called it mental masturbation. Because, the person goes over, and over, and over certain things in the session. It's aspects of the unconscious, but it's never systematic. It is never helpful that I have known or experienced. So, I am resentful...

**JH:** And yet it does tap into to the unconscious in at least in theory, or in aspects of our personalities that interest you.

**DC:** It may, but it's not practical or useful because...

**JH:** It's not applicable?

**DC:** No, no. I think it's very important when someone comes in and they have issues or problems

that a therapist need not only to get them to understand what's going on eventually, but also to give them tools so they can manage their lives on their own. They don't have to sit in the chair as a patient for months, for years, no, no, no, no. Regular therapy is very helpful to have someone who will sit there and hear you out, and be supportive, but it's not useful enough, and it's too lengthy, and it's too expensive. So my desire was to learn different approaches and different tools that would get into the nitty-gritty, that would get into the depth, that would get into the unconscious and the conscious, and then give tools to the person to begin to manage their life more successfully.

**JH:** So tell us a little bit about some of these tools that you refer to as pioneering and perhaps even most importantly, for us, because they're pioneering, they're gonna be probably unfamiliar to most of us.

**DC:** Okay, let's start talking about the unconscious just for a minute. The unconscious is the epitome of the unknown communicating with us. We think that what we are aware of is all there is, which is sad, it's so sad. The unconscious determines 95%-98% of our behavior, and in the last 10 or 15 years, this has been demonstrated with functional brain MRIs. So in other words, those of us who have sort to understand the unconscious and incorporate it in every conscious life have been aware of that but now it is science that is also supporting this. And of course, the biggest area is dreams. What has never failed to amaze me is when I started working with dreams, is I would ask people, "What did you dream this past week or can you share any dreams?" And they'd say, "No, I haven't dreamt. I don't dream." Which is of course, ridiculous because why? Every single person dreams five to eight dreams every single night, unless they're taking medications, that dampen dreaming experience or they are consuming a lot of alcohol and that will tend to dampen it as well.

Otherwise, every one of us have between five and eight dreams every night. Can you imagine the wealth of that information that is coming in? The unconscious is communicating with you about you, for you, and to give you guidance and support. So, once you begin to note and in my book on dreams, the title of the book is, "Dreaming on Both Sides of the Brain". Once you begin to note your dreams and just use some very simple tools to write them down, or dictate them as soon as you awaken, you begin to make sense out of it, it's like those massive doors into the unconscious that opening up, so you begin to understand and not be alarmed or in fear. Let's say I dream my mother was in a car accident and just died, that was the dream. So people become very frightened, "Oh my God, I dreamt my mother's gonna die, is she gonna die? Is she gonna die?" No, no, no, don't take the unconscious literally, because the language of the unconscious is symbols. So whatever mother represents in my waking life, that's what may be coming to a death or an end, it doesn't mean that my mother literally or physically will be ending her physical life as a human being, you see what I mean?

**JH:** This symbolic language of the unconscious still keeps us in the realm of, I think our popular understanding of psycho analysis doesn't it?

**DC:** So, it really open the doors, the gates, the massive gates into the unconscious by starting to explore dreams. However, the interpretation of the dreams is often... Either it's about anger or it's about sex. You have a dream that you're having sex with your mother, oh, it's terrible and it's

interpreted very negatively. And what my guides have inspired about dreams and how to interpret these things is, what is intimacy? What is sex? One body entering another, therefore it is the epitome of closeness that one person entering another is one person getting very close to another. So your unconscious may be saying, "You need to do some work to get close to mama." And not necessarily because you want to have sex or intercourse with mother, you see what I mean? The other part is someone like Carl Jung, you see whatever I do flies in the face of all the accepted approaches. I am very politically incorrect by the way, always have been. But for example, I have a dream guide who came to me and comes every time I work on dreams, he has always trained and guided me in, "Look at the dream in a very simple, down-to-earth way."

**JH:** What is the dream really saying? You dream, and that's very common thing. You dream that you're running down the street, and you're being pursued by a big dark figure, and you're terrified, and that keeps recurring. It's a recurrent nightmare. First question is, what are you running away from in waking time? And how about turning around, and taking a look at that which you're running away from? That's all. And maybe as you begin to make the connections, you see, because your dreams are always related to whatever is uppermost in your waking life. And the metaphor that my guide has offered is really, it's outstanding, it's like today's newspaper. Today's newspaper will always deal with current events, so your dream deals with current events, but also like a newspaper there is a common theory in a newspaper, there is an editorial that will comment what the president is doing is great? Or what the president is doing is not? And it compares to what has happened before, and this is what the advice that need to be taken, or the recommendation that needs to be given, you see. That's exactly what happens in the dream.

So you've made reference a couple of times now to your guide. Can you tell us who that is or what that function is for you?

**DC:** Oh, good heavens, okay. I work with guides and angels of the light, Okay? And have done so far over 30 years. I was working with a patient one day, and at that time I was already clinical psychologist, therapist, etcetera. We were working on one of her dreams, and it was very constipated, ah, ah, you know, trying to move to make the connection that wasn't flowing, and I loved doing therapy. This was very unusual. All of a sudden I heard the voice in my head. By the way I don't hear voices. This was very surprising. I heard the voice in my head saying, "Why don't you try it this way?" And I did, and everything fell into place.

The woman left at the end of the session, it became clear she got the guidance, she got the tools, and then I locked the door, and I said a prayer, because I pray regularly. I am very Jewish. I said the Shammah, the protection, and then I called on that voice. I said, "Who are you? Are you from the light? Why are you here?" And what he said was, "I have come to help you with dreams". He gave me his name. I do not share his name, and he said, "Any time you're working on dreams, I will be there." He has been with me for literally tens of thousands of dreams since that time, and has helped me make sense out of dreams.

**JH:** Does he points out a line of inquiry for example?

**DC:** Yeah, inquiry, but also it's like to make sense out of them, like giving the metaphor of a

newspaper. What's wonderful about my guide is he keeps it simple and down to earth, and yet profoundly effective, and healing, and I love that.

**JH:** So, you also made reference to angels of light. Is this a synonym for the guide, or is it a different source of inspiration and understanding?

**DC:** The divine created the world, us and angels as well, and we live in a world of duality. There is up, there is down. There is male, there is female. And there is dark, and there is light. So when we call on angels, it's not wise, and this has been inspired to. It's not wise to just call on angels. They might be fallen angels. We don't know what they do. So, the best thing because God is love, God is light. It doesn't matter if you are Jewish, or Christian or Muslim, or Buddhist, or whatever. If you believe in divine energy, divine energy is loving, and brings light and delight into our lives.

**JH:** Before we return to the podcast, we wanna let you know about digital learning on the College Commons platform. Beyond this podcast which is available to the public at large, check out the online courses at [Collegecommons.huc.edu](http://Collegecommons.huc.edu) for in-depth learning, digital syllabi, assignments, inspiration for teaching, and one of our most influential courses called "making prayer real". Subscribe with your synagogue for all of this and more. Just click Sign up at [College Commons.huc.edu](http://College Commons.huc.edu). Oh, and one more thing. Help us out, and rate us on iTunes. But whatever you do, do not give us five stars, unless we deserve it. Now back to our podcast.

I'm gonna move the conversation a bit to some of the kind of sociology of your work, which I think, I personally, I'm very curious about. Do you think there is a substantial resistance among many, many Jews to your approach? And then I'm curious...

**DC:** That's very true by the way. That's very true.

**JH:** You do find a resistance?

**DC:** Yes, yes, I do.

**JH:** And now I wanna ask you, so I wanted to find out if you agreed with me, because I think most of my friends would probably be resistant, and I myself, I'm a skeptic, and I find... If I'm honest with myself I find that my intuitive response is a resistant one, and it's important to recognize it, and then I want to ask you, where do you think the resistance comes from?

**DC:** Because we have been raised and trained, especially Americans here, with left brain approach. What is rational, get a good education, become a scientist, a doctor, a lawyer, a business person. And all of that is wonderful, it's fine; these are excellent tools. We have not been raised with "Look at how you feel, and why might you feel that? What can you do at the deeper level?" The typical Jewish approach is very skeptical. With all due respect, and also historically, we have maintained the Jewish identity for over 3500 years. And the Jewish identity involves for... Certainly for me, and to some extent for females... To read; to read from the Torah, to do Bar Mitzvah, to read. I don't know if you're familiar with the work of Bruce Lipton. He wrote a book, *The Biology of Belief*, and he did seminal work in research at the medical

school in the University of Wisconsin and at Stanford as well, that we change our DNA, we change our cells based on what we believe.

DNA is not just a stand that is there forevermore. We change it all the time. So imagine the hundreds of generations that have gotten this basic education to read compared to the other populations, whether they were Roman or Persian or Greek or Muslim or the other populations, will only be intelligentsia, only the people who were wealthy, or the priests or the nuns who learned how to read and write. The rest of the population didn't. So Jews for better or worse, and because of having had the Torah, we have really developed and have grown different levels of our DNA. Also, in order to survive we need to be very aware of our environment, very aware of what's going on, and to try and have as many goods, wealth, connections as possible in order not to be helpless and powerless, and God forbid, God forbid, go through another holocaust.

**JH:** So you think that the way we've developed as a people, and the tendencies we have, have also promoted a kind of a resistance today to the approaches that you bring to understanding the soul and the self?

**DC:** Yes.

**JH:** So I read your book, *Repetition*, about past life regression, and I understand your argument to be the following: That we human beings, we need the repetition of life lessons that have shaped our personalities in order to learn from those lessons to grow as human beings, and you understand that the scope of that repetition not to be merely the length of a single life time, such as most of us probably assume, but rather you understand the scope of that repetition to include the accumulated experiences of multiple lifetimes, and that you kind of treat that multiple experience as the textbook from which we can discern patterns and learn the necessary lessons. Because, and you say this in your book, I think it's beautiful, it's true, that we're slow learners. We need a lot of experience before anything really makes sense to us, and so you bring many case studies and show how past life regression sessions tell stories that help people understand themselves. And then once they understand themselves and these patterns they can begin to move past recurring difficulties and challenges and make healthier choices. Is that a fair summation of your book?

**DC:** It is, but you see there is a very important piece that I want to add. What you did is you summed it up well. Okay, we have all those experiences, and we need them. It is to look at human behavior out of the context of judgment or diagnosis. And I have diagnosed thousands of people as a clinical psychologist of the testing of children and adults. I've done many, many things in psychology. But it is judgmental? Why is a person diagnosed as bipolar? Why are they bipolar? Because they have a brain imbalance. Why do they have a brain imbalance? Because they are bipolar. Why are they bipolar? Because they have a brain imbalance. Do you see how circular it is? I am a pioneer, and pioneers don't usually fit and we don't usually accept everything that is typical. So I'm not a typical psychologist, I'm not a typical therapist, and what was bothersome to me was...

Let's say the daughter of an alcoholic keeps selecting one disturbed person after another, one addict after the other. So what have we said? "Oh, well, she has lost self-esteem. She keeps

making errors. She keeps selecting poorly and badly." And my guides have inspired after years of doing work with that kind of a population. No, it is not selecting badly. On the contrary, at an unconscious level we make those choices in order to feel today what I felt then, let's say growing up or in a relevant past life. So that I bring it to life in the present to have the opportunity to change my reaction now. Otherwise, it's just a bunch of words that we repeat over and over.

**JH:** And thank you for pointing out the non-judgmentalism because that was... That came out very clearly in your book, and I understand how important that is to you, and it's very resonant, and I wanna ask you about the commitment you have to non-judgmentalism strikes me as very divergent from traditional religions. You speak of God as you understand God in the book as non-judgmental and loving, but...

**DC:** Yes.

**JH:** But in the world of the religions that dominate our lives at least in... And there are textbook examples or in the way we experience them socially. God is... One of the major functions of God is to judge, is to establish right from wrong, and to impose consequences, and all of those things are very judgmental, and it seems that you break very radically from that. Is that fair?

**DC:** I do. You are absolutely right. My father's faith was unshakable. We have so many challenges and difficulties, and whatever, he would always say, "Thank you God. Thank you. I thank you." Okay? I got that, and learned the unshakable faith, but in having unshakable faith also I couldn't swallow that that wonderful God would create someone who came into this world blind, or with really serious intellectual limitation, serious physical limitation. It doesn't make sense. It's not a loving God. However, the way that I have begun to understand it, and now I'm totally convinced, and my guides and angels have supported this, is that at the time of creation, the divine created individual sparks of light, and gave each spark is a soul, and gave each soul the gift of free choice. So when a soul chooses to come in and let's say have a hearing problem. What might the issue be? It's not that God judged this person to be disabled, but rather the soul chose to come with this issue, this challenge, because perchance the soul may have given or lent a deaf ear, let's say to those who were poor around him or to his wife or children, so he's come to be on the receiving end of what he has put out. When he begins to experience that deafness, and despite it all can be kind, can be generous. Look at how you transcend the problem.

**JH:** And you're saying that it's not a matter of divine justice, it's a matter of the soul's choice to seek out this kind of remediation, I suppose, for lack of a better word.

**DC:** I would be very afraid to live in a world with a judgmental God.

**JH:** So, I'd like to close with a question from the skeptics view.

**DC:** Okay.

**JH:** It has to do with the verifiability of these experiences, many of which you site in your book. There are fascinating stories of people who enter into a session with you, and engage in a past life regression, and then there's a story often, not always from a previous life, sometimes it's from

an earlier stage in this life.

**27:03 DC:** Not either, or, it's always both.

**27:06 JH:** Both. Fair enough. Thank you, thank you for the correction.

**27:09 DC:** Okay.

**27:10 JH:** But from the skeptics perspective, it's hard to get past the fact that there's no verifiability with respect to whether or not this image or story that the client or patient conjures was genuinely an experience lived in a previous period, or whether or not it's the unconscious in more of a dream creative way coming from the mind of the person.

**DC:** So? So?

**JH:** Right. So my question to you is the following. Does it matter if it really is past life regression or just dream interpretation, or something similar to it. Does it really matter?

**DC:** It matters in your view to begin to realize the grandeur, the depth, the richness of all that is possible. If we only look at the current life, it's so narrow. It's so small, it ends so fast, it doesn't make sense. However, if a person says it's not proven, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. So if people got better as far as I was concerned, Hallelujah, thank you God, they got better, they feel better. Okay. And when they begin to explore other lifetimes, even if they only look at them as stories, you know what, it doesn't matter, if they utilize that information to be more at peace or feel more accepting of what they're doing and have some guidance about what to do to enrich and deepen their life now, that's fine, I don't care what you call it, you see.

**JH:** Which gets to the spirit of your pioneering work of moving beyond psycho-analysis because you're interested in the applicability for improving people's lives in practical and measurable ways.

**DC:** Bravo. You summed it up.

**JH:** It's a very eye-opening and enriching world view.

**DC:** Let me just add one little piece. You're familiar with Kabbalah, Jewish mysticism.

**JH:** Yes.

**DC:** Which has been around for thousands of years. I had the privilege of knowing a world renown Kabbalist in Israel, who died at the age they say, of 113 or 120, something like that. And I met with him a number of times which was very unusual because it was very difficult to ever get a session with him, you see. People would wait six months to a year, and once we had just two three sessions, he started referring to me as the woman who speaks with the angels. He could see what I physically with my physical eyes, I don't see angels. But I hear them in my head. I sense them, I communicate with them. He was a world renown Kabbalist, may his soul rest in



peace. So the stamp came from him more than anything.

**JH:** I see, I see, I understand. And it is indeed the case that the Kabbalah does refer explicitly to the reincarnation of souls so...

**DC:** Yeah.

**JH:** There's a Jewish cultural...

**DC:** The Gulmishamut.

**JH:** Yeah, yeah, the Gielgud, that's right, the reincarnation, it doesn't necessarily diminish American Jews' skepticism such as it is, but it is part of...

**DC:** Maybe it's time.

**JH:** Yeah, maybe it's the time.

**DC:** Yeah, yeah, to just open, open, open their minds, open the possibility and begin to explore it and see if you can use it, and if it's useful for you. In other words, don't judge it and dismiss it. Explore it, that's all.

**JH:** Fair enough. Well, on that note, Dr. Cohen I wanna thank you for the time, the pleasure of making your acquaintance, and for teaching us so much.

**DC:** Thank you. Thank you so much, you're very, very welcome, it was really a pleasure.

**JH:** We hope you've enjoyed this episode of The College Commons Podcast, available wherever you listen to your podcasts or at the College Commons website, [collegecommons.huc.edu](http://collegecommons.huc.edu) where you can also stay tuned for future episodes.