



**COLLEGE  
COMMONS**

DEBORAH DASH MOORE:  
EDITOR OF THE POSEN LIBRARY OF JEWISH CULTURE AND CIVILIZATION,  
1973-2005

(Begin audio)

**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.

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**JH:** Welcome to this episode of the College Commons Podcast where we will have the pleasure of a conversation with Deborah Dash Moore. Deborah Dash Moore is the Frederick GL Huetwell Professor of History and Judaic Studies at the University of Michigan. A widely published American Jewish historian, her work focuses on urban Jews of the 20th century. She is the Editor-in-Chief of The Posen Library of Jewish Culture and Civilization and co-editor with Nurith Gertz, of Volume 10 of that same series covering the late 20th century from 1973 to 2005. Originally written in more than a dozen languages, the selections in the library introduce readers to diversity and the scope of Jewish civilization from the second millennium BCE to 2005. Professor Deborah Dash Moore, thank you for joining us, it's really a pleasure to have you.

**Deborah Dash Moore:** It's a pleasure to be here.

**JH:** I wanted to pick up on a major theme that you, Deborah, really pick up on in your introduction, because this period is so evocative 1973 to 2005, that theme is the mushrooming of the Jewish population and all of its variety. I want to ask you to elaborate a bit on that sense of spiking diversity in the period that you cover in Volume 10.

**DM:** That's a wonderful question, and I'm going to actually step back and say the reason in part that you sense the enormous diversity that spikes in this period is because Nurith and I very self-consciously went out to seek it. In other words, we deliberately did not give you the... What we say, the 100 Greatest Hits. We didn't aim to produce a new Canon, we aimed instead to let readers savor the enormous diversity of Jewish life and the ways in which there were so many different possibilities that open up for Jews, in part it's due to technology. We include popular culture in the volume, which is not necessarily something that's accessible in earlier time periods, but it's also because we were very conscious of how lots of different types of Jews were contributing to what we

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understood to be Jewish culture and civilization, Jews from from different parts of the world but also Jews writing in different languages, using different kinds of methods. For example, we include cook books as part of Jewish culture. We really did want people to come to encounter names that might be unfamiliar to them and then to have them read an excerpt and realize, "Oh, this is a very interesting figure. I wanna know more about her." And I say her because often those new names that we were bringing to people's attention were those of women.

**JH:** So I wanna get to the feminist component of this spiking diversity since you lead into it. One of the dimensions of this broader, more colorful, more textured landscape is the role of women and specifically, ideologically and politically the role of feminism. Can you share with us some aspect of the feminist revolution as covered in these years that's so important in this volume?

**DM:** These were the years in the United States especially of what's often called second wave feminism, which was a feminism that was shaped dramatically by American Jews and at the same time these were the years when you have the rise of Jewish feminism explicitly. So you get the first woman rabbi, Sally Priesand at Hebrew Union College and then Sandy Eisenberg Sasso, and then a number of years later, you have women also being ordained within the conservative movement. You get women running on political platforms in Israel and you get women writing lots of different kinds of... Types of writing, so memoirs by women that are featured in this volume, poetry by women, also like translations. Marcia Falk, who does some wonderful new types of non-gendered prayer is included in the volume. So, these elements give one a sense of this feminist revolution that occurs, and Nurith and I were really self-conscious in seeking out women who wrote, women who were engaged in politics, women who helped to shape the Jewish world, and we understood that Jewish world quite expansively.

**JH:** Continuing this theme of diversity, one of the dimensions of the diversity that you and Nurith Gertz bring is geographic, and particularly to the geographic/diasporic awareness of American Jews, you make a point of making reference to Latin America. Can you talk a little bit about that, because I think it's really eye-opening and extremely enriching?

**DM:** Yes. Well, thank you. So 1973, obviously, was chosen because of the Yom Kippur War, but 1973 is also the year of the overthrow of the regime in Chile, and that really marks a significant change for Jews in Latin America. That whole Latin American story is going to result in changes because of the rise of these autocratic regimes. So it's a way of letting one think as Jews that isn't just US-Israel, but actually does include other parts of the world, and Latin America is a very important part of the world.

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**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 this and more. Just click Sign Up at [collegecommons.huc.edu](http://collegecommons.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.

**JH:** I'd like to move now to a topic that goes literally in the streets as you and I are recording this interview, which is the struggle for civil and human rights in America under the banner of Black Lives Matter, and I wanna give you a brief quote from Michael Lerner's *Anti-semitism on the Left*, which is included in Volume 10, as a conversation piece for us to talk about how times have changed, or not, in relation to the Jewish progressive engagement with these struggles in other American minority populations. He writes, "For many Jews in liberal and progressive circles, the fact that Jewish oppression was not economic made it hard for them to imagine presenting an argument about Jewish oppression, not fully understanding how one could be oppressed if one was not economically oppressed. Many of these progressive Jews were in no position to articulate this to their non-Jewish comrades on the left, who they correctly imagined would be resistant to this kind of concern."

**DM:** I think in the context of the 1970s, it was very clear to Jewish activists that women were an oppressed group, that Jewish women were an oppressed group specifically in terms of the structures of Jewish life. There was less consciousness, however, that Jews were an oppressed group. And indeed, there's conflict that emerges over whether to consider Jews oppressed or not. Jews are not subject to structural racism in American society the way African Americans are, and most of the arguments that occur in the '70s and up into the early '80s have to do with trying to figure out just what kind of oppression Jews do experience. I think if you look at the 1970s, especially the latter part of the 1970s, you'll see the way in which the Holocaust comes to figure for American Jews as exemplifying Jewish oppression, even though it's not something that most American Jews experienced. But the Holocaust comes to move into this place of being able to talk about oppression, gives Jews a language in which to do it. So in '78, you have the series *Holocaust*, you have Lucy Dawidowicz's book on *The War Against the Jews*, you have the creation by Jimmy Carter of a commission that's gonna lead to the Holocaust Museum in Washington. It steps into that place of trying to understand oppression.

**JH:** I'd like to close out by asking you to share with us a source that was totally new to you that you learned about by virtue of the work itself.

**DM:** I was committed to including popular culture, but I did not know some of the popular culture that we ended up including, and we included a number of pieces, both Israeli, Etgar Keret, *Pizzeria Kamikaze*, for example. And we included some popular culture from Will Eisner that I had not... I don't know anything about Will Eisner. So that was fascinating to discover that this person who did comics, or we now call them graphic novels, but this person who did comics.

**JH:** Arguably the inventor of the graphic novel genre.

**DM:** That's correct. This is brand new to me, and it was fascinating to see how he presented it. He and Harvey Pekar, both of them were really new, and it became something that I ended up deciding to teach. I think it broadens their understanding of the kinds of genres that you can use to talk about important aspects of Jewish life.

**JH:** Professor Deborah Dash Moore, I wanna thank you for taking the time, and most of all to thank you for the incredible work that you put into The Posen Library of Jewish Culture and Civilization. It's really a wonderful resource, I recommend everybody to check it out online, which is easy to do, and it's extremely rich and really a pleasure. Thanks to the expertise and clearly the love and passion that you bring to it. So thank you, and thank you for joining us on the Commons Podcast.

**DM:** Thank you for having me.

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**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.

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