



To the Golden Cities: Pursuing the American Jewish Dream in Miami and L.A.

Deborah Dash Moore

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The first great modern migration of the Jewish people, from the Old World to America, has been often and expertly chronicled, but until now the second great wave of Jewish migration has been overlooked. After World War II, spurred by a postwar economic boom, American Jews sought new beginnings in the nation's South and West. Thousands abandoned their previous homes in the urban, industrial centers of the North and moved to Miami and Los Angeles seeking warmth, opportunity, and ultimately a new Jewish community - one unlike any they had ever known. This move turned out to be as significant as their ancestors' departure from their traditional worlds. Earlier Jewish immigrants to the New World had sought to fit into the well-established communities they found in the North, but Miami and L.A. were frontier towns with few rules for newcomers. Jews could establish new economic niches in the hotel and real estate industries, and build new schools, political organizations, and community centers to reshape the cities' ethnic landscapes. Drawing upon rich and extensive research, historian Deborah Dash Moore traces the evolution of a new consensus on the boundaries of Jewish life and what it means to be Jewish. In Miami, this consensus took shape through the struggles to define a community in the face of Christian anti-Semitism. In L.A., Jews were compelled to define their religious and political identities while pressure from HUAC hearings labeled many as communists. Both communities, spurred by the model of the strong, autonomous Jew emerging from the new state of Israel, fought restricted beaches and Christian prayer in schools and made their political presence known. Today these sun-soaked, entrepreneurial communities have become part of a truly American, self-confident style of Judaism. Most American Jews have families or friends who have chosen to live in these urban paradises. Many others have visited or vacationed under their palm trees. Now the vibrant Jewish cul

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