



MORE PRAISE FOR CHUTZPAH GIRLS

LISTED ALPHABETICALLY

“Finally, we can see the array of Jewish accomplishment, commitment, and courage through the prism of the women who are so often unsung! *Chutzpah Girls* is a joy and inspiration to read and look at – and it should be on every young person’s bookshelf, regardless of religion.”

Abigail Pogrebin, Author of *My Jewish Year: 18 Holidays, One Wondering Jew*

“*Chutzpah Girls* explores the pioneering spirit and ingenuity that drive success. This book is a powerful reminder of the impact that determined, courageous women can have on society, and it serves as an inspiration for readers of all ages to embrace their own inner chutzpah.”

Adi Soffer Teeni, CEO, Meta Israel

“The artistry, innovation, and faithfulness to history encapsulated in this volume are simply electric. I can’t wait to read it with my children.”

Avital Chizhik-Goldschmidt, Writer and Rebbetzin of the Altneu Shul

“Having been raised by strong women and privileged to work with some of the strongest, I applaud *Chutzpah Girls* and will make it my go-to Bat Mitzvah gift for all!”

Ben Pery, CEO, Momentum

“Joy, pride, wonderment, and awe are but a few of the emotions that washed over me as I read these stories of the heroines of our people, culled from 4,000 years of Jewish life until today. I can’t wait to read this book with my granddaughters – and grandsons – as each builds their own sense of Jewish pride and sweep of history.”

Blu Greenberg, Author and Founder of the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance

"*Chutzpah Girls* is an inspiring testament to the courage, creativity, and indomitable spirit of Jewish women – like Hadassah's very own Henrietta Szold, who is beautifully featured in this book – reminding us all to dream fearlessly and act boldly."

Carol Ann Schwartz, National President, Hadassah

"It's high time that young girls around the world become acquainted with the many inspirational Jewish heroines we've had over the ages."

Dr. Einat Wilf, Former Member of Knesset

"In a dark world that demeans women and Jews, *Chutzpah Girls* generates light! A must-read for young and old, male and female, Jewish and non-Jewish alike."

Professor Gil Troy, Author of *The Zionist Ideas and Identity Zionism*

"Riveting and inspiring. Only Silverstein and Schlossberg Pruwer would have the chutzpah to write the authoritative composite portrait of chutzpah and pull it off!"

Jamie Raskin, U.S. Congressman

"*Chutzpah Girls* brings the strength, vision, and resilience of Jewish women through the ages to life, in all their color and diversity."

Dr. Judith Rosenbaum, CEO, Jewish Women's Archive

"When being a proud Jewish girl is more important than ever, *Chutzpah Girls* is a captivating reminder to our beloved daughters that nothing can stand in their way."

Karen Cinnamon, Founder of Your Jewish Life and Author of *The Jewish Joy Journal*

"*Chutzpah Girls* provides role models for girls who will find support for their ambitions in the bravery of women in the past. A celebration of the value of chutzpah."

Professor Lori Lefkowitz, Northeastern University, Founder of Kolot and Ritualwell

"I have always drawn inspiration and courage from Jewish women, and now here is a wonderful collection that celebrates their resilience and the chutzpah to believe, even in the most trying times. A great achievement!"

Meredith Jacobs, CEO, Jewish Women International

"Women, men, young and old – everybody should read *Chutzpah Girls* and be inspired by its examples."

Michael Oren, Former Israeli Ambassador to the United States

"*Chutzpah Girls* is a celebration of the diverse and remarkable Jewish women who inspire us all. The stories highlight bravery, resilience, and the multifaceted nature of our community. A must-read for young readers."

Dr. Mijal Bitton, Sociologist and Spiritual Leader of the Downtown Minyan

"An empowering collection of stories that highlight strong Jewish women and their contributions to the world, and encourages the potential we all can aspire to."

Nikki Schreiber, Founding Editor, Humans of Judaism

"The women in this magnificent book embody the very best of Jewish tradition, inspiring our children to be proud of who they are and teaching them there are no limits on what they can become. A go-to gift for young Jews that should be on every Jewish bookshelf."

Sarah Hurwitz, Author of *Here All Along*, Former White House Speechwriter

"Vivid stories that bring to life remarkable Jewish women whose journeys paint a spectacular portrait of resilience. *Chutzpah Girls* captures the raw energy and indomitable spirit of those who dare to dream and do, igniting the spark of courage in us all."

Sarah Tuttle-Singer, Author of *Jerusalem Drawn and Quartered*

"*Chutzpah Girls* encapsulates the bravery, boldness, and brilliance of Jewish women with stories spanning history, regions, and adversities offering something for everyone."

Sheila Katz, CEO, National Council of Jewish Women

Chutzpah Girls



Julie Esther Silverstein
Tami Schlossberg Pruwer

CHUTZPAH GIRLS

100 TALES OF DARING JEWISH WOMEN

Chutzpah Girls

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DEFINITION

CHUTZPAH

[hoot-speh] **noun**

A Jewish superpower: the daring to speak when silenced, to take action when others won't, to try when they say it's impossible, to persevere in times of doubt, to be yourself when it's easier to conform, to stand tall when made to feel small, to believe when it all feels hopeless, to shine your light in the face of darkness.

*“Rabbi Ze’ira said, come and see what chutzpah the Land of Israel has, that it produces fruit [in barren land].”
– Jerusalem Talmud, Taanit 4:5:22*



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PREFACE

Welcome to **Chutzpah Girls** – one hundred real-life tales of proud Jewish women who shaped history, rewrote the future, and helped create a better world. When it was hard to be a Jew and hard to be a woman, Chutzpah Girls dared to speak when silenced, pressed forward when stopped, and made their mark when others wanted them erased.

We hope to power up a generation of knowledgeable and confident Jewish kids by zooming in on Jewish women with extraordinary stories across the diverse Jewish experience. We selected Chutzpah Girls from throughout history and around the world who found the courage to survive and thrive against all odds while living deeply Jewish lives. Our stories are not exhaustive biographies. Instead, they explore the responses of Jewish women to challenge. When met with *chutzpah*, the tests we face can be the building blocks of our potential rather than the obstacles that crush our dreams.

Jewish women endured dual discrimination as women and Jews. Our Chutzpah Girls are Sephardi, Mizrahi, Ashkenazi, Persian, Ethiopian, Indian, and Bukharan Jews, persecuted and exiled, who went on to face unequal treatment as women, often succeeding at great personal costs. They experienced aching loss as they gave up dreams to pursue others and persevered through overwhelming doubt when called to lead. Hard work and *chutzpah*, rather than privilege and background, allowed ordinary women to step up in moments of challenge and opportunity to help more women and Jews do the same.

Chutzpah can be defined in various ways. Like any power, it can be a force for good or harm. What a *chutzpah* that one word can mean so many things! It's no wonder it appears throughout the pages of our ancient texts. The Talmud describes the Land of Israel as having *chutzpah*. How else, the Sages wondered, could fruit grow in a barren desert? The women in this book show us that different moments demand distinct forms of *chutzpah* if we are to defeat darkness and spread our light.

Your authors are no strangers to challenge. We dreamed up and wrote this book amidst a global pandemic that kept our children at home, a war that sent our families running into shelters in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, and the births of two babies, bringing more joy and less sleep into our already busy homes. *Chutzpah* helped us forge ahead – through uncertainty, grief, and exhaustion – to bring these important stories to life.

As there isn't one kind of *chutzpah*, there isn't just one kind of Chutzpah Girl. Some are loud, and others are quiet. Some seek fame, and others prefer anonymity. Some want change, and others embrace tradition. Some win by the sword, and others by the female power of intuition. In this book, we celebrate all Jewish women and believe in the right to equal opportunities so you can create the life of *your* dreams, whether blazing ahead in a profession or lighting the flame of a Jewish home.

Jewish girls today still face challenges. Antisemitism and sexism persist, and the digital world undermines our ability to thrive in the real world, weakening our relationships and self-esteem. We wrote *Chutzpah Girls* so that strong Jewish role models would guide our own sons and daughters as they navigate life's challenges. Even Chutzpah Girls needed Chutzpah Girls! Did you know that Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg's role models were fellow Chutzpah Girls Emma Lazarus and Henrietta Szold?

But this book is not only about heroes – it's about history. The courage of Jewish women is the through line of the Jewish story. *Chutzpah Girls* will take you on a wild ride through the past and introduce you to key terms, from *achrayut* to Zionism, to help you build your Jewish know-how. When you understand your place in the chain of Jewish history, you can help write the next chapter of our shared future.

More than talking history, we wanted to bring it to life with portraits as bright and bold as the stories they portray. We invited a diverse group of female Jewish artists from around the world to depict the dreams, challenges, and achievements of Jewish women, drawing on their unique talents and perspectives. Who is your favorite? We can't wait to hear.

Now, reach for a blanket, a loved one, and cozy up. This book was meant to be shared – by mothers and daughters – and everyone else. Men and women share an equal role in championing progress. We hope our stories will inspire more Chutzpah Champions so that every Jewish child can walk through the world anchored by eternal Jewish values, a deep knowledge of history, and strong Jewish women *and* men at their sides. May our Chutzpah Girls ignite the *chutzpah* within and help you share your light with the world.

Tami & Julie

CHUTZPAH GIRLS

TIMELINE OF JEWISH HISTORY

SECOND TEMPLE ERA 568 BCE–70 CE

The Royalty: Queens who overcame threats and saved their people from destruction.

Queen Shlomtzion unifies the Jewish people in peace.

TALMUDIC ERA 71 CE–640 CE

The Scholars: Sages who debated Jewish laws and guided Jewish practice.

Yalta breaks four hundred barrels of wine in a single night.

ANCIENT ISRAEL ERA 1500 BCE–587 BCE

The Founders: Matriarchs and prophetesses who shaped the Jewish faith.

Sarah gives birth to the first Israelite at ninety years old.

EARLY MODERN ERA 1492 CE–1790 CE

The Torchlighters: Champions of knowledge, tradition, and spirituality.

Asenath Barazani leads a yeshivah in Kurdistan.

MEDIEVAL ERA 641 CE–1491 CE

The Sustainers: Heroes who led the community through golden ages and dark times.

Estellina Conat is the first woman to print a book.

EMANCIPATION ERA 1791 CE–1899 CE

The Fighters: Warriors for freedom, equal rights, and integration.

Annie Kopchovsky is the first female global cyclist.

20TH CENTURY 1900 CE–1999 CE

The Pioneers: Survivors who built the State of Israel and restarted lives in new lands.

Rudolphina Menzel trains dogs to defend the Yishuv.

21ST CENTURY 2000 CE–PRESENT

The Changemakers: Innovators inspired by the past to create a better future.

Batya Sperling-Milner uses the first braille Torah trope.



ABIGAIL

ANCIENT ISRAEL ERA | LAND OF ISRAEL

Prophetess

There was danger brewing, and Abigail knew it. As a prophetess, she could predict the future, after all.

Abigail's husband, Nabal, was a difficult and wealthy man who owned thousands of sheep and goats, but there was a rising power in the Land of Israel. David was a respected young warrior and the leader of a growing army.

As Nabal's large flock was easy for robbers to steal, David and his army formed a wall around the flock to keep the sheep and shepherds safe. When David wanted to get paid by Nabal for his help, Nabal not only refused but also insulted David and his army. Furious, David called for his men to take up arms. "Prepare your swords!" He vowed to get back at Nabal.

Hearing word there may soon be a fight, Abigail acted swiftly. She understood that her husband's bad actions could lead the angry army to hurt her family and cause needless bloodshed. She took strategic action to prevent disaster. Without speaking to Nabal, Abigail gathered large amounts of food and set off to find David and his men.

As David's army advanced on Nabal in a burning rage, the brave Abigail met them face-to-face. Instead of drawing a sword, she fell at David's feet. She offered the food as a peace offering and told David that one day, he would become king and wear the crown of Israel. "God will make you ruler of Israel. God will destroy your enemies. Don't fight against us with your own hands!"

David stopped his army's march against Nabal and praised Abigail's good judgment to prevent such needless bloodshed. With prophetic words and kind deeds, Abigail calmed hundreds of angry men and saved her family. When she told Nabal everything that had happened, he didn't thank her, as he withheld his thanks to David. Instead, his heart hardened like a stone.

A few days later, God struck Nabal, and he died. Remembering Abigail's wisdom, David proposed to marry her. She accepted and became the wife of the future king of Israel.

*"Do not...shed blood needlessly."
— 1 Samuel 25:31*





ADA YONATH

TWENTIETH CENTURY | BORN 1939 | ISRAEL

Crystallographer

Ada was overflowing with questions about the world around her. *How can we see color? Why do we have seasons? What makes the sound of thunder?* Her poor **Jewish** family lived in a single room in a small apartment they shared with two other families in the Geula neighborhood of Jerusalem. But her mind was big, filled with ideas that could not be contained.

At five, Ada's curiosity sparked an experiment to measure the apartment's balcony. With measuring tape in hand, she balanced shakily on a ledge and fell to the pavement below. Ada broke her arm but not her inquiring spirit.

With the encouragement of a teacher who recognized Ada's unique talents, Ada transferred to a special school for bright students. She cleaned, babysat, and tutored other children to help pay for her studies, all while working hard to get good grades.

In university, Ada studied chemistry and later earned her doctorate in X-ray crystallography to discover how to visualize tiny structures like atoms and molecules. She wanted to solve one of the great mysteries of science – how our cells make proteins. Proteins are like factory workers in our bodies. They build muscles, carry oxygen in the blood, and fight off infections. Without them, our bodies can't function properly.

Ada wanted to map the structure of ribosomes, the tiny machines in our cells that make these proteins. Ribosomes were considered impossible to see using X-ray crystallography. "They didn't believe I could do it," she said. But Ada wasn't afraid of hard work.

She experimented under different conditions and, after twenty-five thousand attempts, succeeded in understanding what ribosomes look like and how they do their job. Together with other researchers, she mapped the protein-making process in 3D, helping scientists develop new medicines, like antibiotics, to fight diseases and save lives.

Ada earned a Nobel Prize in Chemistry, the first Israeli woman to receive the prestigious honor. Today, Ada isn't climbing balconies, but she will never stop asking questions.

"I was described as a dreamer. I didn't care."





ADINA BAR-SHALOM

TWENTIETH CENTURY | BORN 1945 | ISRAEL

Education Activist

They pushed the door so hard it nearly flew off its hinges. Adina was only four when the police barged into her Cairo home. Pages of ancient texts flew into the air as the men angrily searched for weapons.

The Israeli War of Independence against Egypt and other Arab countries had started, and the Egyptian government suspected the Jews in Egypt of disloyalty. Adina's father, the well-known and respected community leader Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, had nothing to hide. His home was filled only with books of **Torah**, which seemed to protect him then and always.

As she grew older, Adina too developed a love for books. When she wasn't caring for her ten younger siblings, Adina read all the books she could find. She adored learning and dreamed of becoming a teacher. But like many girls from ultra-Orthodox *haredi* communities, she wasn't allowed to go to high school. She was sent to study sewing instead.

Adina became a successful seamstress and opened a wedding dress shop. But her desire to learn only increased. When her family denied her wish to return to school to study psychology, the science of how people think, feel, and behave, Adina grew determined to expand the possibilities for women like herself.

She spoke out about the state of education in her community, and after years of hard work, she established the first *haredi* college in the world, open to men and women. Adina later entered politics and even created her own political party for the Knesset, Israel's national law-making body. "I wanted to prove that a *haredi* woman could lead," she said.

Thirty years after her wish to study psychology was denied, Adina introduced a degree in psychology at the very college she established. Despite the limits of her upbringing, she managed to knock down closed doors and open up new doors of opportunity for herself and others.

"I'm a go-getter."





ALICE SHALVI

TWENTIETH CENTURY | BORN 1926 | GERMANY

Feminist Educator

Alice was the picture of confidence: an elegantly dressed white-haired woman with a refined British accent; a home filled with friends who swarmed her in admiring conversation; a beloved wife with six children and many grandchildren; and a list of professional achievements that earned her the esteemed title – the mother of Israeli **feminism**. Alice championed the belief that all people, regardless of gender, should be able to pursue their dreams.

Below the surface, however, Alice was filled with self-doubt. As a girl, her family fled Nazi Germany for England on the eve of World War II. In her new school, Alice never felt like the others. “I was an alien. I was a Jew and a foreigner,” she recalled.

Alice was an excellent student in her teens and earned admission to a top university, but she never felt she could impress her male professors. She held back in class, fearing that what she had to say was unimportant.

After university, Alice moved to Israel. Throughout her lifetime, no one worked harder to advance the equal treatment of women in every area of Israeli society. She founded the Israel Women’s Network to pressure the government to create fairer laws and increase the number of women running for office. She headed a trailblazing school providing a broad education to Orthodox girls. She taught and led the English department at multiple Israeli universities, breaking glass ceilings in higher education.

All the while, Alice never shook the feeling of not being good enough. Many women, even those like Alice, struggle with the fear that they don’t belong or can’t be successful. While fighting for others on a national stage, Alice’s biggest fight was the one deep inside of her. With determination, resilience, and a commitment to her principles, Alice learned to overcome the negative voices and develop the internal strength to forge ahead.

*“There’s been enormous progress.
There’s still a lot more work to be done.”*





ANGELA BUXTON

TWENTIETH CENTURY | BORN 1934 | UNITED KINGDOM

Tennis Champion

As World War II made its way to England, food shortages left Angela missing the treats she loved, like cakes made of cream and butter. Then came the blackouts at night that kept the city dark to confuse the enemy planes overhead.

But when the bombs started to fall, her family packed their bags and fled to faraway South Africa. There, Angela grew up and discovered the sport of tennis. Unfortunately, she also discovered racism – the mistreatment of someone because of their race or ethnicity. When Angela had a playdate with a Black girl the same age, her White neighbors came over to complain.

Angela returned to England after the war, where she excelled in junior tennis tournaments but faced discrimination of her own. Due to **antisemitism**, or hate against Jewish people, the top tennis training centers rejected her. “You’re not going to join the club,” they told her. “Why? Am I not good enough?” Angela asked. It was simply because she was a Jew.

For this reason, Angela trained alone and found it challenging to find practice partners. At a tournament in India, Angela noticed that Althea Gibson, an African American tennis player, also spent much of her time alone. She remembered the racism she witnessed as a girl in South Africa and sat down next to Althea. The two women quickly became friends. “We did everything together,” Angela recalled.

Jewish women like Angela and women of color like Althea both struggled for acceptance in the mostly White sport of tennis. On the eve of the French Open tournament, when neither woman had a doubles partner, Angela invited Althea to join her. The pair won the title, and later that year, they won again at the Wimbledon Championships in England, the first ever for an African American.

The friendship between Angela and Althea continued off the court and throughout their lives, supporting each other through victories and hardships.

“We came together and beat everybody.”





ANNALOUISE PAUL

TWENTIETH CENTURY | BORN 1964 | AUSTRALIA

Dancer-Choreographer

Sometimes, we are guided by signs – magical moments we can't explain that lead us down new paths. Sometimes, our signs are not very magical at all. As a girl, Annalouise dreamt of dancing on stage. When she was old enough to get a job and earn some money of her own, a simple chalkboard sign outside a local dance studio was enough to catch her attention. The sign read, "Flamenco!" She decided to give one class a try.

From the first moment, Annalouise felt an immediate connection with flamenco, the passionate and expressive dance characterized by rhythmic footwork, intricate hand movements, and intense emotions. She left her home in Australia to study flamenco in Spain, the country where it began.

There, she learned about flamenco's history. It came about during the time of the **Spanish Inquisition** when King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella expelled the Jews, Roma, and Moors from Spain because they did not follow their rules and were not believers in the Christian religion. As they hid together in caves to practice their customs in secrecy, their sorrows, songs, and steps wove together into a unique art form and a proud culture of defiance.

As Annalouise discovered flamenco's roots, she discovered her own roots, too. Raised by her Ashkenazi Jewish mother, Annalouise decided to locate family on her father's side. "Who are we? Where do we come from? Who are my grandparents?" asked Annalouise. "We're Spanish Jews expelled in 1492," they told her. Flamenco was not just a beautiful dance but part of Annalouise's core being, her DNA. Maybe the chalkboard sign was magical, after all.

Annalouise mastered flamenco and danced all over the world. Today, she leads the renowned Annalouise Paul Dance Theatre and choreographs dances inspired by her unique mixed Ashkenazi-Sephardi heritage and the deeply spiritual Sephardi culture embedded within flamenco.

"We carry stories in our bodies."





ANNE FRANK

TWENTIETH CENTURY | BORN 1929 | GERMANY

Diarist

As a little girl, Anne had a big life. She loved playing ping pong and hopscotch, riding her scooter, and going to the movies. She looked forward to visiting her best friend's house for **Shabbat** dinner on Friday nights and celebrating Jewish holidays with her family.

But as the Nazis rose to power, Anne's world began to shrink. New laws that took away freedoms for Jews forced Anne and her family into hiding. They left their comfortable home and moved into a small secret space behind a bookcase above her father's office. Several righteous non-Jews, including a woman named Miep Gies, brought them food and supplies.

In the cramped, shadowy confines of the annex, Anne began to pen her thoughts in a diary. She found strength in the rustling leaves outside a window. "As long as this exists, I cannot be unhappy," Anne wrote. She could see the beauty of life, even in the worst of times.

Inside the annex, days blended into nights, marked by cautious whispers and the constant threat of discovery. Still, Anne's spirit never dimmed. "I don't think of all the misery." She wrote about the future and her dream of becoming a writer.

Tragically, Anne's story was cut short. Betrayed and captured, she and her family were sent to concentration camps. Anne died, but her father miraculously rediscovered Anne's diary, which Miep safeguarded during their imprisonment. He published the diary on Anne's behalf, thus fulfilling her dream of becoming a writer.

Today, *The Diary of Anne Frank* is one of the most widely read books in the world and is proof of the strength of the human spirit. While life sadly narrowed for Anne, through her diary, her strength has inspired millions worldwide. "I want to go on living even after my death," Anne wrote. She most certainly has.

*"I still believe, in spite of everything,
that people are truly good at heart."*

