

# THE POWER OF HOLY CHUTZPAH



## VALUE

# COURAGE

## *Azut d’Kedusha*

This 90-min session introduces the Jewish value of courage, *azut d’kedusha*, or holy *chutzpah*, as a powerful lens for introspection and growth during the month of Elul. Using stories of real Jewish women from *Chutzpah Girls* and a blend of creative, reflective, and discussion-based activities, you will explore how courage shows up in your own life and how you can cultivate more of it in the year to come.



**TIMELINE: 90 MIN**

**BEGIN WITH INTENTION | 5 MIN**

**INTRODUCTION | 20 MIN**

**MEET THE *CHUTZPAH GIRLS* | 20 MIN**

**PORTRAITS OF COURAGE | 15 MIN**

**COURAGEOUS STORIES | 25 MIN**

**END WITH MEANING | 5 MIN**



### WHO LEADS THE SESSION

Elevating participant facilitation is a powerful way to build confidence and shared ownership of learning. Stepping into a leadership role takes courage and this session provides an opportunity to practice it in a supportive environment.

- Introduce the concept of “holy *chutzpah*” by sharing a personal story of courage or leading the journaling prompts.
- Lead the *Chutzpah Girls* card activity, introducing the stories of courageous Jewish women and facilitating the discussion around their impact.
- Close the session with meaning, inviting volunteers to share their reflections on how they can bring more *azut d’kedusha* into their lives.



### TOGETHER, WE WILL

- Explore the concept of ***azut d’kedusha*** (holy *chutzpah*) as a uniquely Jewish expression of courage, and Elul as a time for courageous reflection, repair, and recommitment.
- Share stories of brave Jewish women who embody courage across generations and contexts.
- Identify moments in our own lives when courage was present, and when it is needed now.
- Create a space for connection, laughter, vulnerability, and inspiration as we prepare for the new year.



### FACILITATOR PREPARATION

The facilitator should familiarize herself with the themes of Elul, focusing on introspection, *teshuvah*, and the concept of *azut d’kedusha* (holy *chutzpah*). She should also familiarize herself with the stories of the eight featured *Chutzpah Girls* in the card deck (added at the end of this session). The facilitator should plan to create a welcoming, non-judgmental environment, encourage participation, and model vulnerability by sharing her own reflections.



### MATERIALS FOR THIS WORKSHOP

- Blank paper
- Markers
- Pens
- Contemplative music to play during creative time and speaker (optional)
- *Chutzpah Girls* cards (included at the end of this session)



### BRINGING THE LEARNING HOME

One of the most powerful ways to internalize Jewish values is to bring them into your home.

This session’s focus on courage offers a natural entry point for conversations with your children about bravery, identity, and speaking up for what matters. You can share the stories of *Chutzpah Girls* with your kids, using the cards as visual prompts, or even invite them to choose a card of their own and talk about what makes someone courageous. Consider replicating the journaling or portrait activity at home. Drawing each other’s portraits or asking questions like “What color is courage?” can open up deep, playful, and meaningful conversation across generations. Ask your children who they see as a courageous *chutzpah* woman. Let your kids see that courage comes in many forms, and that it runs in the family.

## PART I

# INTRODUCE HOLY CHUTZPAH



20 MIN

Set the tone for the session by introducing courage as a core Jewish value, emphasizing *azut d'kedusha* (holy *chutzpah*), and framing the discussion within the themes of Elul.

## Opening

2-3 MIN

In Jewish tradition, courage isn't just about boldness; it's about acting with holy *chutzpah* — *azut d'kedusha*. **When you act with holy *chutzpah*, you stand for a purpose larger than yourself, overcoming conventions of society or your own internal limits to move beyond your comfort zone in order to do the just and courageous thing.** The stories in *Chutzpah Girls* remind us that courage comes in many forms, women standing up for their families, communities and values, and for innovation that helps people around the world. Today, we'll use these stories as inspiration to explore how we can embody *azut d'kedusha* in our own lives.

## Elul: Courage to Reflect and Commit

2-3 MIN

Elul is the month of preparation for the High Holidays. It's a time for introspection, self-reflection. This takes courage: the courage to look honestly at where we've fallen short, to repair relationships, and to commit to doing better in the year ahead. ***Azut d'kedusha* during Elul isn't just about grand gestures; it's about taking small, bold steps toward growth, inspired by our values.** Why? Grand gestures tend to be short-lived because they do not align with the embedded ways our body responds to change. Human beings naturally resist change, but we remain open to new small steps that align with what is important to us. That's why building a new habit takes repeated small steps, celebrating success, and being clear about the benefit, the *why* behind our actions.

## Journaling

5 MIN

Invite participants to explore what courage means to them by journaling answers to the following prompts. Distribute paper to those who don't have their journal, and pens to those who need them.

- What **color** is courage?
- If courage was a **flavor** of ice cream, what ice cream would it be?
- If you had to cast an **actor or actress** to play courage in a film, who would you choose?
- What is the first **song** on your courage playlist?

## Share Back

10 MIN

For each prompt, ask 2-3 women to share their answers. Invite participants to post the name of their song on your WhatsApp channel and compile them to create a ***Chutzpah Girls* playlist** for your group.

## PART II

# MEET THE CHUTZPAH GIRLS



20 MIN

Fan out the deck of Chutzpah Girls cards so that your participants can see their faces and the beautiful art. Invite each participant to select a card.

If you have more than eight participants, have them do the activity in pairs or small groups.

## Meet Your Chutzpah Girl

5 MIN

Read her story and reflect on what stands out to you about her courage.

## Share Their Courageous Stories

15 MIN

Go around the room and briefly introduce your *Chutzpah Girl* to your fellow participants by sharing the 1-2 min version of her story.

## PART III

# PORTRAITS OF COURAGE



15 MIN

You often see yourself through a single lens—your own. But what if you've been a *Chutzpah Girl* all along, even if you haven't recognized it yet? **As a mother, daughter, friend, volunteer, and leader, you show up with courage in ways big and small, often without realizing the boldness in your own actions. What happens when you allow others to reflect you back to you?**

In this activity, you will create self-portraits—but with a twist.

Your portrait will be drawn by multiple people, with each person contributing just one feature, making your final portrait a shared creation. This exercise isn't about artistic skill; it's about perspective, trust, and embracing the many ways you show up in the world. Let go of perfection, lean into the experience, and celebrate the *Chutzpah Girl* in you!

- **Distribute Materials:** Give each participant a blank sheet of paper and a marker.
- **Pair Up:** Participants will pair up five times, each time with a different person. If there is an odd number of participants, the Community Leader should join in as needed.
- **Paper Exchange:** Each participant writes their name at the top of their paper and hands it to their partner at the start of each round.

## Drawing Activity

- Each round, partners take three min to draw a specific feature of the person whose paper they are holding, following the prompts provided.
- After three min, swap papers back so each participant receives their own page again.
- **Transition & Music:** Use music as a signal for transitions. When the music stops, participants find a new partner, exchange papers, and repeat the process with a new feature prompt.
- **Repeat for Three Rounds:** By the end, each participant will have a page filled with contributions from five different partners.

## Create!

10 MIN

### FIRST FEATURE - THE EYES (2 MIN)

Each person draws only the eyes of the person whose name is on the paper in front of them.

- Encourage careful observation rather than artistic perfection.
- After 3 min, pass the paper to the person on your right.

### SECOND FEATURE - THE HAIR (2 MIN)

Now, each person draws the hair of the person whose name is on the paper.

- Encourage them to capture texture, shape, or any details they notice.
- After 3 min, pass the paper again to the right.

### THIRD FEATURE - THE MOUTH (2 MIN)

Each person adds the mouth to the portrait in front of them.

- Remind participants to embrace creativity—this is not about a perfect likeness.
- Pass the paper to the right.

### FOURTH FEATURE - THE NOSE (2 MIN)

Now, draw the nose of the person whose name is on the paper.

- Pass the paper to the right.

### FIFTH FEATURE - THE FINAL DETAILS (2 MIN)

The final contributor adds any remaining facial details (ears, glasses, freckles, jewelry, etc.).

- Pass the paper one last time back to the original owner.

## Reveal & React

5 MIN

Each person looks at their completed portrait.

Ask them to take a moment to process their reaction:

- Does this look like what you expected?
- What emotions come up as you see yourself reflected by others?

Encourage participants to share their reactions:

- How does it feel to see yourself through others' eyes?
- What part of the drawing feels most “you” and why?
- What was it like to have multiple people contribute to your portrait?
- How does this relate to the way you see yourself vs. how others see you?

## PART IV

# COURAGEOUS STORIES



25 MIN



The Momentum Fellowship

## What makes you a *Chutzpah Girl*?

5 MIN

Reflect on a story of courage from your own life and write it in your journal.

## Share My Courageous Story

20 MIN

Invite each participant to share her 2-3 min story of holy *chutzpah*.

*The Momentum Fellowship is an opportunity for women who are ready to step into leadership roles in their communities, just as the Chutzpah Girls have done. For those interested in cultivating their own azut d'kedusha on a larger scale, explore this fellowship as a next step.*



## About Our Content Collaborator

Embark on an extraordinary journey to discover the stories of daring Jewish women, past and present, who triumphed over darkness and went on to create a brighter world. From Abigail to Zivia, *Chutzpah Girls* come from diverse communities across the globe with powerful stories to awaken your Jewish pride, inspire you to explore your heritage, and, despite the odds, dream bigger than ever before. *Chutzpah Girls: 100 Tales of Daring Jewish Women* includes 100 original portraits by Jewish female artists worldwide.

## Continue the Journey

Join inspiring Yomm journeys led by two incredible *Chutzpah Girls*, Noa Tishby and Lori Palatnik. Experience their wisdom and Jewish joy firsthand and discover how you too can channel your inner *chutzpah*!



Talking Antisemitism and Israel with Noa Tishby



Start with Joy with Lori Palatnik



**ASHAGER ARARO | ETHIOPIAN ACTIVIST**20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY | BORN 1991 | ETHIOPIA

The high-pitched cry could barely be heard over the crunching sound of feet trudging hurriedly along the unpaved gravel road. But there, in a patch of shrubs, somewhere along the four-hundred-mile trek from the Ethiopian village of Gondar to the capital city of Addis Ababa, a baby girl was born.

The mother desperately needed to rest, but she kept going. It was no longer safe in Ethiopia for Jews like her. A civil war was raging, the government was close to collapse, and rebels were attacking the capital. Israeli planes would soon arrive, offering safe passage for Ethiopia's Jews to the Holy Land. The mother named the baby Ashager, meaning "go forward" in Amharic. Nothing would stop her from reaching the land of her dreams.

Ashager was one of the youngest babies to arrive in Israel on Operation Solomon, a secret military airlift of 14,325 Ethiopian Jews in thirty-six hours. Seats were taken out of planes to rescue as many of the Beta Israel community as possible. One plane even set a world record for the most passengers on a single aircraft.

It wasn't easy to adjust to life in Israel, but Ashager remembered her parents' hopes and those of the generations that came before. "I can actually live the dream of being here, being Jewish, being safe." Today, Ashager is an ambassador for the Ethiopian Jewish community. She proudly shares her story with audiences around the world, online, and at home in Israel. Ashager is the founder of an Ethiopian Israeli heritage center, celebrating the Beta Israel through food, photography, art, music, and lots of dancing.

Why do they dance? "We're a happy people!" Ashager explains. "We have so much to celebrate."

*"Imagine your entire life you were praying about this place, generation after generation."*

**KIRA RADINSKY | COMPUTER SCIENTIST**

TWENTIETH CENTURY | BORN 1986 | UKRAINE

Cuba hadn't seen a cholera outbreak for over one hundred years. But Kira knew it was coming. She was not a fortune teller or even a medical doctor. She was a computer scientist with a special skill. She could look at large amounts of information to find patterns and make predictions. Kira had gathered and analyzed years of data on past outbreaks of the bacterial infection. Her research showed that when a poor and dry country has a flood, an outbreak of cholera is likely within a year. Her prediction gave Cuba the time to better prepare for the outbreak and save lives.

As a data scientist, Kira has been able to predict the spread of the coronavirus, the likelihood of a tsunami after an earthquake, and changes to gas prices after a hurricane.

Perhaps not coincidentally, she was born in the Soviet Union, where her life was anything but predictable. "There were food shortages, chemical radiation accidents, and antisemitism," she said. "We always lived with uncertainty." Everything changed for Kira when her family was able to move to Israel. "I had every opportunity."

At age eight, she started computer coding, and by fifteen, she enrolled in the Technion, the prestigious Israeli university for technology, science, and engineering. Kira served as a programmer in a top intelligence unit of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and returned to the Technion for her doctorate. Later, she worked for top companies and started her own businesses. From her unpredictable childhood in the Soviet Union to today, Kira is a global leader in the science of using data to make meaningful predictions that help people live healthier and safer lives. Kira has also found welcome predictability in her own life when she gets to spend quality time with her family every week on Shabbat

*"When I was little, they asked me what I would want if I got three wishes. I replied that I did not need three but only one - to know everything."*

**LORI PALATNIK | JEWISH INNOVATOR**

TWENTIETH CENTURY | BORN 1960 | CANADA

Her friends weren't so sure about this whole kidney donation thing. "Lori, you have children and responsibilities. Why risk your life?" they pleaded. But Lori was determined. "Why would God give us two kidneys if we can live a perfectly healthy life with one?" she asked them. "Perhaps one to keep and one to give away."

Lori's journey to becoming an organ donor started years earlier when a friend needed a kidney transplant. While her kidney was not a match at the time due to size, it planted in Lori the idea to perhaps donate to someone else. As a result of serious illness, thousands need new kidneys each year, and the waiting list far exceeds the supply. People die every day waiting for a kidney.

One day, Lori was asked if she'd donate her kidney to a stranger. Hesitant at first, she drew on her sense of achrayut, the responsibility we have for one another. "For someone I don't know?" she wondered hesitantly. "But someone knows her. This is someone's wife, mother, daughter, friend. Why would I pass up this mitzvah just because I don't know her?" Lori's mind was made up.

She underwent medical tests and was matched with a mother of seven suffering from a life-threatening disease. The transplant was successful, and happily, the recipient went on to live a normal, healthy life. Today, with just one kidney, Lori does more than most do with two. As founding director of Momentum, a global movement that has sent over twenty-five thousand Jewish women to Israel, she works tirelessly to strengthen the spirit of Jewish women all over the world, for she believes that women, as mothers and leaders, are responsible for ensuring the future of the Jewish people. And she knows from experience and Jewish teaching that if you can save even one life, it is as if you have saved the entire world.

*"Even if you don't give a kidney, be a giver - for givers are happy people."*

**MARGRET REY | WRITER-ILLUSTRATOR**

TWENTIETH CENTURY | BORN 1906 | GERMANY

Margret pressed her ear against the radio to hear the breaking news. The reception was crackly, but the message was clear: World War II was coming to France.

Margret and her husband, known by the initials H.A., were desperate to flee the Nazis but had few options. The roads out of Paris were blocked, and the trains weren't running. They managed to find a bicycle shop selling spare parts and cobbled together two working bikes overnight. By daybreak, the couple speedily pedaled out of the city with some essential supplies and their sketches for a children's book about a monkey.

The route to safety was full of obstacles. After France, the couple traveled through Spain, Portugal, and Brazil before arriving in America. Along the way, they were taken in by strangers, hid in a barn, and lost most of their luggage. The monkey in their sketches was also in constant danger. He outran angry firefighters, teetered on telephone wires, and got carried off by helium balloons.

While they saved the story of the monkey, the monkey often seemed to save Margret and her husband. More than once, they were stopped and searched by police, but the playful drawings charmed the authorities, and the couple was released.

Margret and H.A. made it to New York with little money but their drawings intact. One year later, they published *Curious George*. The book was an instant success.

At first, Margret's name was left off the cover to suggest that only a man had written the book, but it was rightly added in later editions. Together, the couple wrote and illustrated each monkey adventure in which *Curious George* lived out the desires of his creators—for freedom and a happy ending.

*"Children need dreams and they need heroes. For children, George is both."*



**MEERA JACOBS MAHADEVAN | HUMANITARIAN**

TWENTIETH CENTURY | BORN 1930 | INDIA

A crying baby lay amidst the rubble of a busy construction site in the Indian city of Delhi. It was no place for an infant. Cranes swung back and forth, and heavy stones fell from the backs of work trucks. But there was nowhere else for the child to go. His mother was a migrant laborer who worked on the site and made so little money that she couldn't afford to pay someone to watch him.

Meera was walking by the construction site when she heard the baby's cry. Meera was part of Bene Israel, a community of Jews who lived peacefully in India for two thousand years. She was a novelist and wrote about the strong connection she felt as a Jew to her native country and her Hindu and Muslim neighbors. She believed Bene Israel carried a responsibility to help improve all of Indian society, not just their own community.

Meera ran over to pick up and comfort the baby and quickly realized that other young children were also wandering around the construction site—and this was only one of many buildings going up in the fast-growing country.

Against the sounds of sledgehammers and cement mixers, Meera set up a tent at the site where she cared for the children. She soon created a volunteer organization called Mobile Crèches to create hundreds of childcare centers on construction sites across India. The centers stayed open at night, teaching mothers to read so they could earn better wages and break the cycle of poverty.

Meera's organization is still active and growing fifty years later. It has transformed the lives of one million of India's poorest children and their families.

*"The first lesson we learned was that a child cannot be isolated from its family or the community."*

**NOA TISHBY | AUTHOR AND ZIONIST ACTIVIST**

TWENTIETH CENTURY | BORN 1975 | ISRAEL

Noa has always had a lot to say. A born storyteller, she landed her first television commercial at the age of eight and later starred in and created leading shows in Israel and the United States.

Stories were in her DNA. Noa's family weren't performers, but they played a starring role in the story of the State of Israel. A Zionist pioneer, her grandmother was a founder of Degania, the first kibbutz in Israel, and her grandfather was Israel's first ambassador to West Africa. Noa moved to Los Angeles to advance her career. She made Hollywood history by selling the first Israeli television show to an American network, opening a new market to bring Israeli stories to a global stage. But far from her homeland, she drifted from who she was. A few months after she moved to America, her family called to say Shanah tovah. They wanted to wish her a happy Jewish New Year. Noa was startled—she'd forgotten all about the Rosh HaShanah holiday.

That moment pushed Noa to figure out who she was, and as she learned about herself, she learned how misunderstood she was by others—as an Israeli and as a Jew. Noa decided to rededicate herself to supporting her people and country. She had the early foresight to recognize the dangers of online incitement against Israel and helped establish Israel's approach to digital hasbarah in an effort to explain and share the truth.

Noa also wrote best-selling books about Israel and the Jewish people to tell their stories to the world. Thanks to these efforts, Noa was appointed Israel's first special envoy for combating antisemitism and delegitimization, fighting public attacks on Israel—much like her own grandfather. Noa was destined to be a storyteller. As an activist, she's not just telling the story. She's changing the plot by fighting to ensure a bright Jewish future.

*"I simply couldn't stay silent. I knew there was something else, something deeper."*

**ROYA HAKAKIAN | WRITER-JOURNALIST**

TWENTIETH CENTURY | BORN 1966 | IRAN

When the Second Holy Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed, a group of Jews fled to Persia. In the Persian city of Shushan, a Jewish woman named Esther became queen. When Jews celebrate Purim each year, they read the story of how she saved her people from near destruction. Jews have lived there ever since.

Hundreds of years later, Persia became the country of Iran. There, another Jewish girl, Roya, grew up in the capital city. When she was thirteen, her country and her life changed dramatically. A new group of religious Muslim leaders overthrew the Iranian leader and came to power, determined to rule according to strict religious principles. The new government forced women to cover their hair and wear loose-fitting clothing so only their faces and hands could be seen. Women were banned from many jobs and were not allowed in some public spaces. Along with the new rules for women, Roya and the Persian Jews also felt threatened by increasing antisemitism and violence.

As a teen, Roya found comfort in writing and began to publish her poems. Eventually, Roya and her family fled Iran for safety and freedom in the United States. Finding her voice and writing in a new language took time, but she worked hard and spoke out about her experience in Iran—being forced to leave and not having the freedom to read, write, and say what she wanted.

Today, Roya is a celebrated writer and has published several books, including a memoir called *Journey from the Land of No*, about her childhood in revolutionary Iran. After losing and then regaining her freedom as a woman and a Jew, Roya now lives in a world of yes and embraces the value of free expression. "Judaism fosters free-thinking and individuality," said Roya. "This is too rare in the world today." Like Queen Esther, she uses her voice to speak her mind and save innocent people from injustice.

*"The space to think freely is the greatest gift."*

**ROSALIE SILBERMAN ABELLA | SUPREME COURT JUSTICE**

TWENTIETH CENTURY | BORN 1946 | CANADA

The Silbermans were married just as the Nazis invaded Poland. They chose life in the face of fear and soon had a son, but the family was deported to the concentration camps. The parents managed to survive. Their young son did not.

After the war, they decided to choose life again and start their family anew. They had a daughter and then another. Little Rosalie was born in a displaced persons camp in Germany, and when she was four, the Silbermans immigrated to Canada with little more than hope for a better future.

Rosalie's father had trained as a lawyer in Europe and even defended displaced persons in the camps. He hoped to practice law in Canada but was told he could not. You had to be a citizen, and he wasn't.

When he came home and told the family the news, little Rosalie spoke up. "If you can't be a lawyer, then I'm going to be a lawyer!" She wasn't sure what that meant but was taught that anything was possible with hard work.

Rosalie worked hard and, after graduating from law school, was appointed a family court judge. She was the first Jewish female judge in Canada and the youngest in the country's history. Many of the Jewish men she worked with changed their names to conceal their Jewish identity, but Rosalie never did.

*"I wanted people to know who I was. I would succeed on hard work alone. I had chutzpah!" she said.*

In her career, Rosalie worked tirelessly to eliminate the disadvantages faced by people with disabilities, women, people of color, and the native aboriginal community. After twenty-five years as a champion of human rights and equality, Justice Rosie became the first Jewish woman to sit on the Supreme Court of Canada.

*"We have to wear our identities with pride."*