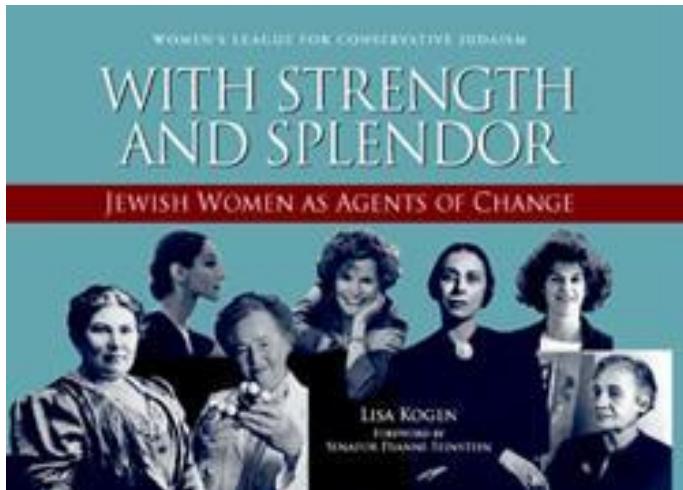


With Strength & Splendor: Jewish Women as Agents of Change

By Lisa Kogen (2008)



With Strength and Splendor: Jewish Women as Agents of Change was unveiled at Convention 2008 to rave reviews. It is an extraordinary book highlighting extraordinary North American Jewish women from the past two centuries. Begun as Beauty, Brains and Brawn: The New World Balabuste, the Women's League exhibit commemorating the 350th anniversary of the arrival of Jews in North America, it has been expanded and given a new title, With Strength and Splendor, reflecting how Jewish women disassembled old gender roles, shattered boundaries, and expanded the options for future generations.

The exclusion of Jewish women from historical narratives is nothing new. With Strength and Splendor redresses this imbalance by introducing some extraordinary women – each of them a pioneer in some way – into the historical account. According to author and Women's League Education Director, Lisa Kogen, the lives of Jewish women had been dictated by external political restrictions and internal cultural and religious considerations. In the new world, Jewish women have been freed to explore new frontiers in science, the arts, politics, religion, and even competitive sports. But even as they successfully challenged cultural norms of femininity and notions of a woman's place, their accomplishments continued to be neglected in Jewish historical writings. This project aims to bring women in from the margins.

Half coffee table book, half encyclopedia, this book contains dozens of beautiful photographs and brief but potent and analytical biographical essays that can be read again and again. The selection of these women is an eclectic amalgam of known and unknown women who have made important contributions to life in North America. In addition to celebrated Jewish women like children's author Judy Blume and Supreme Court Justice Ruth Ginsburg, the book is filled with women whose stories have been relatively unsung. They range from pioneer lawyer Felice Cohn to Planned Parenthood founder Bessie Moses. Their stories are all different, the women are all distinct: some are pious, others hardly identifiable as Jewish, some are radicals, scientists, athletes, and artists. Regardless, each woman is truly an agent of social change.

This collection not only honors exemplary Jewish women, but it also serves to encourage and inspire young Jewish women, fighting similar and disparate battles every day.

WOMEN'S LEAGUE FOR CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM

WITH STRENGTH AND SPLENDOR

JEWISH WOMEN AS AGENTS OF CHANGE



LISA V. KOGEN

FOREWORD BY
SENATOR DIANNE FEINSTEIN

WITH STRENGTH AND SPLENDOR

BY
LISA V. KOGEN

They came to the New World carrying not only their clothing and bed linens, but also their dreams for a different kind of life. They were the children of immigrants, or immigrants themselves. Some were the daughters of rabbis who had taught them sacred texts, not knowing where or how the precious learning could be of use. Some were the cosseted daughters of wealthy German Jews, and many others were fleeing the political oppression and the more oppressive poverty of Eastern Europe.

Within a stunningly short period of time this collection of extraordinary women engaged with the wider world in pursuits that once had been doubly closed to them – as Jews and as women. They were all pioneers. Many focused their energies and talents on building communal infrastructures, initially the only socially acceptable forum for women in the public arena. A few have readily recognizable names: Rebecca Gratz, Lillian Wald, Henrietta Szold, and Mathilde Schechter.

Others ventured further afield into arenas where few women dared tread: Louise Nevelson entered the male-dominated world of sculpture; Gertrude Elion, chemistry. Lillian Hellman became a playwright, Senda Berenson pioneered women's team sports, and Felice Cohn was one of the first women to practice law in Nevada and to be admitted to the bar of the United States Supreme Court. They served on corporation boards, they led marches on behalf of women's suffrage, and they created a new, culturally relevant genre of children's literature.

(continued on back flap)

(continued from front flap)

Other pioneers, often overlooked because their accomplishments were not deemed newsworthy by those (men) writing mainstream history, contributed mightily to improve the lives of other women: Bessie Moses audaciously championed contraception in the early twentieth century when it was illegal; Jean Nidetch, the founder of Weight Watchers, helped millions talk themselves to better health; and Ida Cohen Rosenthal liberated women from physically constricting corsets with a modern new contraption called the brassiere.

As women and as Jews they deftly transcended social, economic and cultural barriers that had confined and defined them. But in dreaming their dreams, they were able to improve our world and enrich our lives.

LISA V. KOGEN

Lisa Kogen grew up in Detroit, Michigan, and now lives with her husband in New York City where she is the Education Director of Women's League for Conservative Judaism. She is a doctoral candidate in Jewish history at the Jewish Theological Seminary.



Cover: (front row, left to right) Mathilde Schechter, Gertrude Elion, Bessie Moses, Lillian Rifkin Blumenthal, (back row, left to right) Celia Franca, Judy Blume, Gilda Radner



WOMEN'S LEAGUE FOR CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM

475 RIVERSIDE DRIVE, SUITE 820

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WOMEN'S LEAGUE FOR CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM
NEW YORK

WITH STRENGTH AND SPLENDOR

JEWISH WOMEN AS AGENTS OF CHANGE

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For information please address:

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To the memory of Rona Jaffe, whose love of books
and the written word is a blessing to us all

*"She is clothed with strength and splendor,
she looks to the future cheerfully"* (Proverbs 31:25)





IN MEMORY OF
SYLVIA DWOSKIN GOLDSTEIN, 1918–1993
BY DIANE WOHL

My mom was always bigger than life to me. A woman blessed with extraordinary common sense, talent and warmth, she seemed to have a knack for making what seemed difficult, easy. She was always there to listen and not judge, and people of all ages, especially her grandchildren, found her to be their personal confidant. To know her was to love her. You couldn't ask for a better friend, and growing up, I looked for those qualities in my own friendships. She opened my eyes to the arts, sports, and cooking as well as encouraging me to feel confident about myself and living in the world around me. My mom was the American girl, yet unknowingly, she sent me on my Jewish journey. Among her most precious words of wisdom and life's most precious lesson: "judge people on their character not their possessions". She was loyal, and family meant everything. I aspire to her ideals and coveted her strength in difficult situations. She was, and still is, my moral compass. To this day I still ask myself, "what would my mom do?" I miss her very much.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword by Senator Dianne Feinstein 7

Introduction 8 Map 10

PROFILES

Rona Jaffe	12	Carol Gilligan	44	Bobbie Rosenfeld.	78
Lynne M. Abraham.	14	Ruth Bader Ginsburg.	46	Ida Cohen Rosenthal.	80
Theda Bara	16	Rebecca Gratz	48	Mathilde Schechter	82
Eleanor Baum.	18	Jennie Grossinger	50	Arlene Schnitzer	84
Senda Berenson	20	Ruth Handler.	52	Frances Slanger.	86
Pauline Berman.	22	Lillian Hellman.	54	Rosa Sonnenschein.	88
Judy Blume	24	Donna Karan.	56	Rose Pastor Stokes	90
Lillian Rifkin Blumenfeld.	26	Estée Lauder	58	Henrietta Szold	92
Felice Cohn	28	Anne Lapidus Lerner.	60	Sophie Tucker	94
Thelma "Tiby" Eisen	30	Jessie Marmorston	62	Lillian Wald	96
Gertrude Elion	32	Bessie Moses	64	Dora Wasserman.	98
Edna Ferber	34	Carrie Marcus Neiman.	66	Gertrude Weil	100
Celia Franca	36	Louise Nevelson	68	Sadie Rose Weilerstein.	102
Ray Frank.	38	Jean Nidetch	70	Rosalyn Yalow	104
Betty Friedan	40	Shirley Polykoff	72	Appendix.	106
Esther Pauline Friedman and		Gilda Radner.	74	References	108
Pauline Esther Friedman	42	Ernestine Rose	76	Acknowledgments	110

Picture Credits 112

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Cory Schneider

In honor of Naomi Friedman—mentor, coach, cheerleader, friend, supporter, convention roommate.
My mother's unconditional love and support allowed me to become the woman I am today.
She was a true woman of valor and I thank God for our time together.

Janet & Alan Arnowitz

Sandi Stern & Tamar Arnowitz,
sources of strength and splendor to all

Evelyn & Rube Auerbach

In memory of our parents, Fannie &
Max Auerbach and Ida & Jacob Cohen

Evelyn Berger

Dedicated to my friend,
Gertrude Golub, with great love

Rina & Burt Lerner

Rosalie & Dr. Lawrence Berman
In loving memory of Ella S. Berman,
a life board member and
devoted supporter

Barbara Braunstein

In memory of a super mother and
mom-mom, Clara Shufman

Gloria B. Cohen

In honor of my mother,
Bessie Tanenbaum Buchbinder

Judi and Rabbi Barry Kenter

Women of splendor and strength,
Dorothy Dickstein and
Marjorie A. Kenter

Susan Lodish

In loving memory of
Charlotte Fischer, Marlene Fischer
Perry and Sylvia Lodish—
all women of strength and splendor!

Blanche Meisel

In fond memory of two important
women in my life,
Minnie Long and Bessie Meisel

Marjorie Dobin Sivin Miller

L'dor v'dor: Margie, Maxwell,
Christina, Justin, Lindsay,
Isabelle, Charles

Marjorie Shuman Saulson

For my beloved grandmother,
Bertha Lerner Corn

Evelyn Seelig

For my wise and wonderful mother,
Bella Schnear Tomchin Holzman

Lois and Michael C. Silverman

For the great women who shaped
our lives with love and strength

Carol Simon

In honor of Abby Silverston and
Marilyn Simon, with love

Janet Tobin

In memory of my mother Molly Rosen
and mother-in-law Mary Tobin

Anna Tractenberg

With love to my family and friends,
a constant source of inspiration

Rita and Barry Wertlieb

To the women in our family
for their strength

Anonymous

Celebrating Nanny Rose, Bobbi,
Doc, and Miss M