

Eight Over 80 SAGES

When I consider all the Eight Over 80 Honorees who have received Jewish Senior Life's Tikkun Olam Awards, I am inspired to dream of a realm where time flows differently, and there exists a special gathering place where some of the greatest minds and spirits from Jewish history converge. It is a sanctuary where wisdom, courage, and faith intertwine to create a beacon of light for the world. Here are some of the awesome eight over eighty:

1. Rabbi Akiva, a shepherd was one of the most revered sages in Jewish history. His teachings of love and unity wove the fabric of Jewish law, influencing countless generations. His dedication and perseverance were a testament to the power of learning at any age.
2. Rabbi Moses ben Maimon, Maimonides was a great philosopher and physician. He penned the *Mishneh Torah*, a comprehensive codification of Jewish law, and *The Guide for the Perplexed*, a work that bridges the gap between faith and reason. He believed that understanding the natural world was essential to understanding G-d.
3. Rabbi Joseph Karo, the author of the *Shulchan Aruch*, unified Jewish legal practice, becoming the definitive code of law for Jews around the world. Karo's contributions were made in his later years, a period where many might rest, but he continued to work tirelessly for the good of his people. His legacy was one of unity, providing a common ground for Jews of diverse traditions to follow the same legal principles.

4. Ruth Bader Ginsburg was the first Jewish woman and the second woman to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court. She was a voice for gender equality and workers' rights, and ruled on the landmark case Obergefell v. Hodges, which legalized same-sex marriage in the United States. She graduated first in her class from Columbia Law School, challenging sexism personally and overcoming it. She was the first person on both the Harvard and Columbia law reviews and became the second female law professor at Rutgers, who fought for equal pay.

5. Golda Meir, the fourth Prime Minister of Israel was a Jewish freedom fighter long before her appointment. Meir aided Jewish war refugees during WWII and fundraised for an independent Israeli State. She was known as the "Iron Lady" of Israeli politics, Meir led her nation through some of its most challenging times, including the Yom Kippur War. She was a symbol of strength and resilience, proving that leadership knows no gender or age. She spoke of the importance of defending one's people, of the difficult decisions that leadership requires, and of the hope for peace that must never be taken for granted.

6. Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, radiates with warmth. His leadership of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement transformed Jewish life worldwide, emphasizing outreach, education, and community. The Rebbe's message was clear: every act of goodness creates a ripple effect that can change the world. "You cannot add more minutes to the day, but you can utilize each one to the fullest."

7. Albert Einstein, the world-renowned physicist, developed the theory of relativity and revolutionized the way humanity understands the universe. He was a humanitarian who used his influence to advocate for peace and civil rights. His contributions to science forever altered humanity's understanding of the cosmos, and he reminded everyone that the pursuit of knowledge must always serve the greater good.

8. Judith Kaplan Eisenstein was the first American girl to have a Bat Mitzvah. Her groundbreaking Bat Mitzvah in 1922 paved the way for greater inclusion of women in Jewish religious life. As a musicologist and educator, she had enriched Jewish culture and ensured that women's voices were heard. Eisenstein spoke of the importance of tradition and innovation, of how the two must coexist for a culture to thrive. Her pioneering spirit opened doors for countless women and girls, forever changing the landscape of Jewish education and ritual.

As these great souls gathered together in the sacred space, their conversations intertwined, creating a place of wisdom, resilience, and hope. Each had made a significant difference in the world, not only through their achievements but through the lives they had touched and the values they upheld. Their legacy was one of enduring influence, proving that age is not a barrier to greatness. And it is a testament to the power of experience, the depth of wisdom, and the strength of character that comes with a life well-lived.

This is how I picture the Eight Over 80 Honorees every single year. The work they accomplish and the differences they make in the life of our community will survive for eternity.