

JEWSWEEK

July 22, 2002

[raHome](#) > [Society](#) > **The Jewswweek Fifty: The 50 Most Influential Jews in America**

Featured Sponsor

Recent & Decent

- ▶ [Pearl Harbor: An interview with Jerry Bruckheimer](#)

- ▶ [Walking in the Valley of the Shadow of the Death](#)

- ▶ [Is Viagra Kosher? And other questions you've been meaning to ask about sex](#)

- ▶ [New York: America's Worst Jewish City](#)

- ▶ Previous Issues:
 - [First Issue](#)
 - [Second Issue](#)
 - [Third Issue](#)
 - [Fourth Issue](#)

Society



News Headlines

Please reload this page to view the headlines

Please reload this page to view the headlines

The Jewswweek Fifty

The 50 Most Influential Jews in America

Jewswweek.com | Influence is a funny thing. It can mean so many things – power and inspiration to others just to name a few. Some of the people on this list are influential because of their positions (Alan Greenspan) and some people are influential because of their personal impact on the Jewish community (Shlomo Ressler). Both are important.

When compiling this list, we went to the influential people themselves – asking a panel of

celebrities, politicians, educators, and “average” Jews who they thought should be on this list. We realize that this list may cause some controversy, by virtue of some of the people we included and by the exclusion of others. That’s fine. We just hope to get the ball rolling on this national discussion.

Something to consider when perusing this list: You will see some “small local” people higher up on the list than some of the big power brokers. That’s because being an influential Jew means touching people’s lives and helping promote the Jewish ideal of “being a light unto the nations.” That is why you’ll see Rebbetzin Miriam Feldman (13) ahead of say, Mortimer Zuckerman (14) because of the intense impact she has within her community. As the Talmud teaches, those who save one life have saved a world entire.

Finally, keep this in mind. If you didn’t make it on the list this year – keep trying.

1. Alan Greenspan

The country is in an economic downward spiral. Since January, companies have announced 652,510 layoffs – and more are announced each day. People are not looking to Superman to save the day. They are looking to one person, and one person only. As Federal Reserve Chairman, Alan Greenspan is, hands down, the most influential Jew in America. He is, some would argue, the most influential person in America. With each interest rate cut – another is expected this week – this 74-year-old contains the key to an economic turnaround in this time of recession. When he speaks, the world listens. Besides that, he’s the economy’s most optimistic cheerleader. “With all our concerns about the next several quarters, there is still, in my judgment, ample evidence that we are experiencing only a pause,” he said in a speech recently.

2. Ruth Bader Ginsburg

The buck stops with Justice Ginsburg. And so did the election. In *Bush v. Gore*, Ginsburg helped shape the national agenda for the next four years. And with the Supreme Court making significant decisions on a daily basis, her role as part of the elite group of top decision-makers in this country makes her all that more influential. What’s more, the Court’s recent decision in *Good News Club v. Milford Central School*, as well as President Bush’s unwavering desire for faith-based initiatives, takes issues of religion off the back-burner.

3. Gerald Levin

Gerald Levin holds a lot of power over you. Name an industry and he has his hand in it. As the second-in-command at AOL Time Warner, he controls what you watch on television, what books you read, how you surf the net, and how your news is delivered – just to name a few things that he can do.

4. Senator Joseph Lieberman

OK, so he’s not the Vice-President, but this Connecticut senator still wields much power in the Washington beltway. His religiousness serves as the backbone for much of his legislature including his continued war against Hollywood. As a politician, he stands tall as a moral epicenter in an oft-immoral business.

5. Steven Spielberg

Consider the following: Spielberg’s Dreamworks SKG has finally put a dent into Mouse House’s animation with its blockbuster film “Shrek”—which just passed the \$200 million mark and could easily take the Oscar in the new Best Animated Film category. The pre-buzz on his latest film “A.I.,”

due out this week, is already good. And the third installment of the phenomenally successful "Jurassic Park" franchise is stomping on theaters later this summer. But we already know that Spielberg is a success in Hollywood. It's the fact that he's an influential Jew that puts him on this list. His Shoah Foundation continues its noble crusade to videotape any Holocaust survivor willing to tell their tale. His Righteous Persons Foundation (formed with the profits from the 1993 blockbuster, "Schindler's List"), has been focused entirely on the flip side of charity: giving money away. Mr. Spielberg set up the foundation with a mission of promoting Jewish learning, advancing intergroup tolerance and "using arts and media to engage broad audiences on questions of what it means to be Jewish."

6. Julie Wiener

As the Jewish Telegraphic Agency's lead writer on issues of Jewish education, synagogues, spirituality, philanthropy, and the Jewish federation world in the United States, Wiener sets the agenda – and tone – for national Jewish issues of import.

7. Ari Fleischer

When we're living a country where the president isn't always the most succinct person, his press secretary becomes even more important to help convey to us his message. And that person would be 40-year-old Ari Fleischer. Jews were heavily represented in the Clinton Cabinet and White House, but Fleischer is one of the few Jewish faces in a Bush administration. "I believe deeply in my religion and I believe in the principles of my party," says Fleischer. "I don't commingle the two." The son of New York Democrats, Fleischer has spent two decades on Capitol Hill as a Republican party spokesman, and reached the pinnacle of his profession earlier this year when he became White House press secretary. "The Jewish religion teaches people to be responsible, to be open-minded and to care about others," he says. "And I hope that people see that in me as I do my job."

8. Michael Bloomberg

Self-made media mogul Michael Bloomberg has founded a global financial-information company in his own name, grown his net worth to equal the gross national product of a small Central American country, and helped the FBI battle computer hackers and extortionists from Kazakhstan. What's a billionaire to do next, but run for mayor of New York City, one of the highest-profile jobs in American politics outside the presidency? The 59-year-old entrepreneur, whose company provides financial data that pops up on 160,000 desks worldwide, is one of the richest people in the world. Bloomberg is reluctant to give out his net worth but press reports estimate he's worth \$4 billion. He recently gave \$100 million to his alma mater, Johns Hopkins University. He sits on the boards of scores of institutions, from the Metropolitan Museum of Art to the Police & Fire Widows' & Children's Benefit Fund. As he told the *New York Times* in January, "I'm a great American dream."

9. Rabbi Herman Neuberger

Neuberger has been the executive director of the Ner Israel Rabbinical College in Baltimore for more than half a century. Although he comes across as a low key and humble individual, he is one of the most politically well-connected Jews in the Beltway. Additionally, he is viewed as one of the top Orthodox leaders in the country, which is the reason why many pulpit rabbis consult with him when they have important issues to discuss.

10. Steve Ballmer

Steve Ballmer took over as chief executive of Microsoft from Bill Gates six months before a federal court ordered the breakup of the company. As he waits for an appeal decision, Ballmer is guiding the software giant through one of its busiest and most challenging years ever. The CEO has proven he's not afraid to ruffle feathers, like when he hired an outsider -- Rick Belluzzo -- to rescue its MSN Internet service, and then promoted him above company vets to the post of president. Ballmer may be humbled, but he's as confident as ever. He reportedly has no contingency plan if the appeals court upholds the breakup ruling. Oh yeah, one more thing. He's the 13th richest person in the *world* with a net worth of \$16.6 billion.

11. Rabbis Nosson Scherman and Meir Zlotowitz

In the summer of 1976, these two friends published an edition of the Book of Esther and now, 25 years later, they run one of the most successful Jewish publishing houses in the world. As if icing was needed on that cake, their Artsroll Publications has been the catalyst for countless people to begin their return to traditional Jewish observance. "When historians look back to the latter part of the 1990s and trace what has become an extraordinary explosion of Jewish learning in the Orthodox community and beyond, a lot of that has been attributable to Artsroll," says David Zweibel, executive vice president for government and public affairs of Agudath Israel of America.

12. Brad Turell

While Turell was the head of communications for The WB television network, he began a religious odyssey that transformed he and his family into observant Jews. Well, the Lord works in mysterious ways. In April, he was promoted to the top communications slot for all of Turner Broadcasting which includes TNT, TBS Superstation, The WB Network, Cartoon Network, Turner Classic Movies, Turner South and Boomerang; the CNN News Group Networks, which include CNN/U.S., CNN Headline News, CNNfn, Accent Health, CNN Airport Network, College Television Network (CTN), CNN Radio Network, CNN.com, CNNfn.com, CNNfyi.com and MyCNN.com; and Turner Sports, which includes the Atlanta Thrashers, The Goodwill Games, CNN/SI, CNNSI.com and Nascar.com. With all of the recent claims of CNN's alleged media bias against Israel, it will be interesting to see how Turell handles the position.

13. Rebbetzin Miriam Feldman

Miriam Feldman does not stand in the shadows of her husband, Rabbi Ilan Feldman of Congregation Beth Jacob in Atlanta, Ga or her late father, Reb Yaakov Weinberg. She rightfully stands on her own. The mother of eight, she is a beacon of inspiration to all who know her. Her Torah knowledge, genuine piety, and sincerer faith only begin to scratch the surface. She has helped influence an entire community by starting, single-handedly and against all odds a top-notch girls high school in the heart if the South. Not only that, but by stubbornly maintaining its standards, she has set the bar for all other girls-only high schools to follow.

14. Mortimer Zuckerman

Mortimer Zuckerman brings clout and cachet to the chairmanship of one of America's most influential Jewish groups. In a staggering 46-6 vote, the media and real estate baron was elected as chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. Zuckerman also received bipartisan support from Israel's two most recent prime ministers, Ehud Barak and Benjamin Netanyahu. In addition, the he owns *U.S. News & World Report* and the *New York Daily News* and is presumed to have some degree of influence over those publications' news coverage and editorials.

15. Abraham Foxman

Living in America, Jews are inevitably exposed to anti-Semitism. From vandals to the Klan, Jews are unfortunately still persecuted. To counter-attack those hate mongers, America's Jewish community has a knight in shining armor and his name is Abraham Foxman. As the national director of the Anti-Defamation League, Foxman leads a collection of local ADL offices in the fight against anti-Semitism in America. From the Marc Rich scandal to the Charlie Ward fiasco, Foxman is called upon to set the tone for how the rest of American Jewry responds.

16. Rabbi Benjamin Blech

Rabbi Benjamin Blech is no idiot – but he's hoping that you are. The mild-mannered, 60-something rabbi, with his perfectly coiffed white hair and pearly white smile, is an internationally recognized scholar and media darling who has appeared on Oprah and in the pages of Newsweek. He also spent almost 37 years as the spiritual leader of a New York synagogue. He's an author and an educator at Yeshiva University. But what he's most known for now is penning the Jewish installments to "The Complete Idiot's Guide" series including "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Understanding Judaism" and "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Learning Yiddish." Blech has written eight books, four in the last two years, and a couple more are on their way. "These books reach out to everybody," says Blech. "People are not offended by the title, but rather consider it a way of saying that no matter what level you're at, you'll be able to learn."

17. Rabbi Shmuley Boteach

Mention Rabbi Shmuley Boteach's name and you either hear cheers or groans. Nonetheless, the New Jersey-based rabbi is the face of rabbinic Jewry to most of America. Whether he's hanging around Michael Jackson or on television talking about kosher sex, this controversial rabbi remains influential – despite all the scandals that continue to pile up on him. And just when you thought he had nothing else to write about, he just co-authored a new book with spoon-bender Uri Geller entitled "The Psychic and the Rabbi."

18. Dr. Laura Schlessinger

Controversial radio host Dr. Laura may have the largest audience of anyone who claims to speak from and for Jewish tradition. A Jew by choice and self-described follower of Orthodoxy, Dr. Laura often invokes the Hebrew scriptures in her "tough love" stands against premarital sex, divorce, single parenting, abortion, feminism and, most notoriously, homosexuality. Earlier this year, she received the "National Heritage" award from the National Council of Young Israel. Moshe Bryski, Dr. Laura's rabbi, says that there is a sense of responsibility being the spiritual leader of such an influential person. "At times she'll call me about specific questions and I realize the answer is going to be broadcast to 20 million people, and I better get it right," he says.

19. Jon Stewart

Comedian Jon Stewart, 38, is not your average funnyman. Stewart gets paid \$1.5 million to do a fake news show every night on Comedy Central – and it might just be the smartest thing you'll see on television. Proof, they say, is in the pudding. The show won a Peabody Award. To top it off, the New Jersey native has made being Jewish hip, by frequently commenting on his religion during his show. By referring to Christians as "you people" and generally pontificating on social satire through a Jewish lens, Stewart – in his own twisted way – has made it ok to come out of the closet with Jewish pride.

20. Clark Howard

More on this story



Why I Think Reb Shlomo Carlebach Should Be On This List by David Sacks

- Reb Shlomo is one the 50 most influential Jews, because he blazed a new path in serving G-d, thereby transforming the way Jews approach their spirituality today. The awareness that Judaism **is** spiritual is revolutionary enough. But most thought that aspect was the domain of the Hassidim only. Through Reb Shlomo's melodies, and the Torahs he rescued from the vanished worlds of Kotzk, and Ishbitz, of Belz, Breslov, Karlin and Riminov (to name but a few) Jews from across the entire spectrum of religious observance are realizing that a Jew's heart has to be on fire in the service of their Creator, that for a Jew to be superficial today is a criminal offense, that it's not enough to define your Judaism by what you're against—you have to be *for* something!

There is a famous parable about a king who has to send a message behind enemy lines. He can't send his emissary dressed in royal finery because the messenger will never make it. Therefore he disguises his messenger as a commoner, guaranteeing that he will go unnoticed. Reb Shlomo was that hidden messenger. Had the world known in his lifetime his true greatness in Torah and avodas Hashem then he never would have been able to travel to and reach the places he needed to in order to send Hashem's message of hope and comfort to the world. Now since his death, for the first time, the world is realizing that Reb Shlomo was one of the undisputed leaders of the generation.

David Sacks, a television writer and member of the Happy Minyan, resides in Los Angeles.

Clark Howard was always a hero. In his hometown of Atlanta, his radio talk show brought new meaning to consumer advocacy. Anything from helping listeners get the cheapest airfare to calling a misbehaving landlord – it was all in a day's work for the self-proclaimed geek. The mere mention of his name brought corporate bigwigs to their knees. Now, besides his consumer advocacy books, his radio show has crossed the border by becoming a nationally syndicated three-hour afternoon show.

21. Robert Wexler

Elected in 1996 to represent Florida's 19th congressional district, after a decade in the state legislature, Mr. Wexler quickly established himself as a force on Capitol Hill, sponsoring high-profile investigations into the poor conditions at the F.B.I. crime lab and the high price of matzo in south Florida. By the fall of 1998, the congressman from Boca Raton was emerging as a national figure, the only House member to attend the signing of the Wye Accords and one of President Clinton's most articulate defenders during the House impeachment hearings. Smart, telegenic — he's become a permanent fixture on the cable news-and-chat circuit — and Jewishly aware (he's a graduate of the Wexner Heritage adult Jewish learning program), Mr. Wexler, now 39, is poised to become one of the most important Jewish voices in Washington. What secured his inclusion on this list, however, was his passionate defense of voting rights in his Palm Beach County district, home of the infamous butterfly ballot. In the coming year we predict he will be playing an increasingly visible role as a voice of the Jews of South Florida, America's third-largest Jewish community.

22. Jay Schottenstein

Schottenstein's name has become synonymous with philanthropy. The Columbus, Ohio native has turned giving charity into an art form. His name is attached to college dormitories and university sports arenas. More importantly, he has attached his family name to Jewish education. Besides giving money to local institutions, he is a frequent call on the list of Jewish day schools across the country. And, perhaps even more importantly, he has become a de facto sugar daddy for Artsroll Publications, helping them publish the entire Talmud in English.

23. S. David Freeman

Freeman is an engineer and the head of the Los Angeles Municipal Power Department. He said, "I see it as my duty to provide enough power for Christmas lights, even though I am Jewish." Freedman, now 75, has headed public power

authorities in several states. Freedman was an adamant opponent of California's deregulation policy and lobbied hard that to make sure that municipally owned systems were left out of deregulation. Now he is smelling like a rose, because the city of Los Angeles, with its' own power plants, is insulated from the widely-publicized California electric power crisis. Freeman is both a

civil engineer and an attorney.

24. Daniel Goldin

Daniel Goldin has been head of NASA since April, 1992. Despite some difficulties, critics rate his tenure as head of NASA to be very successful given the budget restraints his agency works under. In a time when millionaires are paying for trips to space and there are renewed relations with the Russian space station Mir, Goldin's role becomes even more important. Not to mention the fact that someday soon, space travel will be available for non-astronauts.

25. Rabbi Avi Shafran

Rabbi Avi Shafran, the director of public affairs for Agudath Israel of America, and is slowly becoming the de facto voice of Orthodoxy in America. The right-wing and outspoken rabbi is often cited in news articles to form the Orthodox opinion on any given matter. In addition, his recent watershed cover story for Moment magazine called "The Conservative Lie," Shafran outlines how the Conservative movement has become a "failure" and called the denomination "superfluous."

26. Calvin Klein

When people hear his name, they immediately think of fashion. Earlier this month, the American designer won a lifetime achievement award from the Council of Fashion Designers of America. He is a true trend-setter and a tremendous influence in the world of fashion industry.

27. Rabbi Ephraim Buchwald

The brainchild of the National Jewish Outreach Program, Buchwald has his hand in more people's return to traditional Judaism than anyone else in recent memory. His "Turn Friday Night into Shabbos" and "Read Hebrew America" programs have set the bar high for success for other outreach organizations.

28. Rabbi David Ellenson

The new president of the Reform movement's seminary is a scholar known for his work in Jewish religious thought, ethics and modern Jewish history — and for his popularity as a teacher. Rabbi David Ellenson, a professor at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion's Los Angeles campus since 1979, will be the college's eighth president. Ellenson, 53, replaces Rabbi Norman Cohen, who had served as acting president of HUC since December, when Rabbi Sheldon Zimmerman resigned amid allegations of sexual misconduct. The new president assumes the reins of HUC at a time when many are looking to the college — which has grown dramatically in recent years and also has campuses in Cincinnati, New York and Jerusalem — to address the significant shortage of rabbis, cantors and other professionals in Reform Judaism. With 906 member congregations, Reform is the largest stream of Judaism in North America.

29. Michael Ovitz

Once hailed as the most powerful talent agent in the world, Michael Ovitz is poised for a comeback. Last winter he formed AMG, the Artists Management Group, and has gone head-to-head with his old company -- and emerge victorious. Already many big CAA names have crossed the line in the sand to join AMG. Claire Danes, Lauren Holly, Minnie Driver, Marisa Tomei, Mimi Rogers, Sydney Pollack, Martin Scorsese, and Robin Williams all have been plucked from the CAA waters. Ovitz is now poised to hoist his newest big project even higher than CAA. The opportunity requires a huge amount of industry expertise, a fantastic reputation, and some hefty nerve. But if the past is any predictor of the future, Hollywood had better take shelter: Ovitz is back in town.

30. Edwin Black

Edwin Black is on a crusade. In an age where we are ruled by the gods of technology, his striking factual account of how the biggest computer corporation aided Hitler in his final solution is nothing short of mind-numbing. His book, "IBM and the Holocaust: The Strategic Alliance Between Nazi Germany and America's Most Powerful Corporation" has caused quite a stir. "Because of IBM and the Holocaust, we will never look the same way at the issues of U.S. and international corporate complicity in the Holocaust," said Rabbi David Saperstein. The Washington, D.C.-based writer, who himself is the son of Polish survivors, is also playing an integral role in the Holocaust reparation payments.

31. Neil Thalheim

In a time when the term "solidarity" is being used in countless articles about Israel, Neil Thalheim is answering that cry. Together with his wife Susan and a business associate, Jacob Haller, Thalheim created a grassroots effort in Great Neck, NY called the Israel Emergency Solidarity Fund in October 2000. The organization has since gone national, holding Walk-a-Thons (walk4israel.com) to help aid the families of terrorist victims. "Being silent while Jews are being murdered is a mistake we cannot afford to repeat," says Thalheim.

32. George Hanus

George Hanus is a visionary – and sometimes his vision is a little blurred. The high-powered Chicago businessman came up with an idea a few years back: He wanted every American Jew to bequeath five percent of the value of his or her estate to mega-endowment funds intended to cover the costs of yeshiva and day school tuition. The campaign's thesis is that every Jew has a stake in subsidizing full-day Jewish students because these students to a large extent are our future. Dubbed "Operation Jewish Education," Hanus' initiative barely picked up steam. However, his clout still keeps him on this list. Besides, everyone is waiting to see if his next project, the Jewish Broadcasting Network – a Jewish television network set to launch this summer – will take off.

33. Aaron Sorkin

The Emmy-winning writer of the hit television show "The West Wing" has created a new Camelot in the psyche of America. In the fictitious Bartlett White House, Sorkin provides America with a weekly dose of the kind of government he thinks we should have. In addition, he's Jewish – and spiritual – ideologies make their cameos on the show – including an episode where a top White House staffer gets advice from a rabbi on Shabbat morning about the death penalty.

34. Rabbi Martin Weiner

As the new head of the Reform movement, this San Francisco pulpit rabbi has the power to help Reform Judaism continue its turn towards a more traditional approach to religion.

35. Mel Brooks

Although Brooks hasn't had a hit in what seems like a millennium. But he made a comeback this year -- and he made it big. His new Broadway show "The Producers," which recently garnered a record 12 Tony awards, has a waiting list so long, your grandchildren might not even get in. And the show has made Nazi-bashing in style again.

36 & 37. Evan and Jaron Lowenstein

Evan and Jaron Lowenstein are more than just a pop duo. Yes, they're frequent guests on MTV. Yes, *People* magazine listed them in their 50 most beautiful people in the world issue. That's not what makes them special. The 27-year-old identical twins are a role model for Jewish teenagers. The twins are observant Jews and not ashamed of it. They never play on Shabbat and require kosher meals wherever their tours take them. "Sometimes I'm so burnt from partying and playing, I wish it [the Sabbath] lasted for three days," Jaron told the *New York Times* last month. Legions of teenage girls -- mostly Jewish -- log on to the folk duo's Web site on a daily basis to discuss the ins and out of the band. One recent post was by a Jewish girl who had decided to observe a fast day, which she had never done before, simply because Evan and Jaron were doing it. "They believe God will protect them," said Jordan Burger, the band's booking agent, of the secret to their success. "And you know what? It seems to have worked out that way."

38. Leon Wieseltier

The author of the groundbreaking book "Kaddish," this D.C. socialite also serves as the literary editor of *The New Republic*. In Judaism's elite intelligencia, Wieseltier is their pied piper. His book revealed the history and law of *kaddish* to an audience of people who had not heard of it otherwise. This white-mained maverick, married by Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, is a non-conformist in all sense of the term. His new approaches to Jewish texts allow an entry point for secular scholars to study and examine *halachah*.

39. Rabbi Marc Schneier

The author of "Shared Dreams: Martin Luther King, Jr. & the Jewish Community," is taking his work seriously. Besides just writing a book on the topic of black-Jewish relations, Schneier is doing something about it. Earlier this month, Schneier -- the president of the Foundation for Ethnic Understanding -- met secretly with Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan. The session was a first step toward repairing Farrakhan's relationship with American Jews and bolstering the historical civil-rights alliance between that group and African-Americans. One more thing: He has the ear of the Hollywood elite. His New York synagogue in the Hamptons -- complete with a helipad in the parking lot -- is where stars like Spielberg like to daven when in town.

40. Rebbetzin Esther Jungreis

A Holocaust survivor, Jungreis has created a Jewish awakening. Her weekly lectures in Manhattan draw hundreds of Jewish singles. As well, she lectures all over the world, inspiring them with her tales of triumph. In a society that is fast leaving their roots, Jungreis -- and her message to restore and renew the core values of Judaism -- is a force to be reckoned with.

41. Aaron Goldsmith

In the heart of middle America, Aaron Goldsmith is a microcosm. In the tiny town of Postville, Iowa, this Lubavitch city councilman is serving as a role model for interfaith relations. The way he interacts with the locals in his town serves as a barometer for the rest of the country.

42. Tamir Goodman

Dubbed “The Jewish Jordan” by *Sports Illustrated*, Goodman has made an indelible mark on the world of collegiate sports. He’s also a role model for Jewish kids growing up showing them that they can follow their dreams without having to compromise their Judaism. When he travels, says a family friend, Jewish children sometimes accompany him to shul to watch him *daven*, or pray. He wears his Judaism on his sleeve -- literally. The *Sports Illustrated* pictorial on him contained photographs of him wearing *tefillin*. On the court, the 6-foot-3, 155-pound lanky Goodman is compared to the great Pete Maravich. What Sandy Koufax was to Yom Kippur, Tamir Goodman is to Shabbat. He never plays on the day of rest. Towson bucked ACC conformity by not scheduling any games between sundown on Friday to sunset on Saturday to accommodate Goodman. Once, when the team was on the road and sundown was approaching, Goodman got out of the team van and walked three blocks to a house where he was staying for Shabbat. “They see me fasting on some days, and they learn about Havdalah and kosher food,” Goodman says. “It’s a great opportunity to teach them about Judaism.” At a recent game, his yarmulke falls off his head during a scramble for a rebound, and before dribbling the ball up court, he pauses to bend down and puts it back on his head. The crowd roars its approval. “I’m still only a kid,” Goodman once told a reporter. “I’m just Tamir.”

43. Joshua Hammer

In 1999, Hammer, a *Newsweek* reporter, published the controversial autobiographical book “Chosen by God: A Brother’s Journey” about how he coped his brother’s choice to become ultra-Orthodox. Two years later, Hammer is now the Jerusalem Bureau Chief for *Newsweek*. It is through his eyes that the rest of the world views the Israeli conflict. Earlier this month, Hammer himself made news when he, along with a photographer, were kidnapped during a routine interview with a militant Palestinian group. “The kidnapping had indeed been symbolic,” wrote Hammer in a *Newsweek* piece after the incident. “But with its eerie echoes of Western hostage-taking in neighboring Lebanon during the civil war, it mainly symbolized a new stage in the ever-worsening conflict.”

44. Sharon Tzur

Sharon Tzur, director of Media Watch International, is the mastermind behind HonestReporting.com. The fledgling, New York-based outfit has quickly gained a devoted following by pouncing on media outlets they feel either are reporting inaccurately on Israeli-Palestinian violence or engaging in flat-out anti-Israel bias. “The media says it is committed to fair and accurate coverage, and what we’re trying to do is to hold them to that standard,” says Tzur.

45. Yitta Halberstam

Yitta Halberstam is a worker of small miracles – literally. The author of the wildly-popular “Small Miracles” series, Brooklyn resident has inspired millions with her tales of divine intervention. Her inspirational books have sold millions of copies, the publishing equivalent of Jurassic Park. “All my life, I grew up hearing these Chassidic tales of God’s divine intervention in people’s ordinary lives,” says Halberstam, 50.

46. Richard Allen

Richard Allen is a top soap opera writer. He has twice been nominated for the daytime Emmy award. He cannot attend the awards because they are held on the Sabbath and he and his family are Sabbath observant Jews. "We're very observant toward religion," he says. "The way I justify it is, anyone who does anything immoral on the show gets punished twofold. Terrible things wind up happening to them. Nobody on a soap opera escapes justice." He now writes for "As the World Turns". He was chief writer for "The Days our Lives". The story gets better. For the last eight years he has been teaching radio/television writing at Texas Christian University, a quite conservative institution. Allen is concerned about the morality in soap operas, as befits someone who is a religious Jew teaching at TCU.

47. Lavi Greenspan

If it were up to Lavi Greenspan he would not be on this list. While enrolled in a joint program with the Yeshiva University rabbinic ordination program and the Fordham School of Law, the New York native became afflicted with a rare disease and went completely blind at the ripe age 26. Most people would take that as a deterrent, but Greenspan has taken his personal tragedy and turned it into a public victory. While blind, he completed his rabbinic ordination and finished law school, passing the NY bar -- hard tasks even with eyesight. Now, the 29 year-old works as in-house counsel for IDT, a technology firm in the Big Apple. Over the past three years, Greenspan has spoken at more than 100 organizations across the world sharing his story of triumph and inspiration with thousands of Jews. All who have listened to his heroic story have left a better person.

48. Ilene Busch-Vishniac

Born 1955 in Philadelphia, Professor Busch-Vishniac is the Dean of The Johns Hopkins University School of Engineering. When she was appointed, in 1998, she was said to be one of less than ten women in America who serve as the dean of a university engineering school. She is the holder of several patents, including telecommunications patents.

49. Richard Meier

Meier is a world famous contemporary architect. Besides being awarded the prestigious Pritzker prize, he was the chief architect of the Getty Museum and many other notable buildings. An interesting note, his firm was selected to design the "2000 Church" by Pope John Paul II. This is the millennium church for the city of Rome. Surely, Jewish architects have designed churches before. But a project of this importance has to be unique.

50. Shlomo Ressler

In September 1995, Shlomo Ressler was an advisor for the Los Angeles chapter of NCSY (National Council of Synagogue Youth). As part of his volunteer duties, the Israeli native wrote an article about the weekly Torah portion for the chapter newsletter called "Bible Babble." Two people read his first installment. As time went on, and the Internet took shape, people started telling their friends about Ressler's weekly e-mails, now archived conveniently at weeklydvar.com. Like a virus, his legions of readers grew -- and grew. As of this printing, Ressler's e-mail list has ballooned to more than 15,000 in 2001, and all by people referring their friends. Single-handedly, and without being affiliated with any particular organization, Ressler is able to reach more people than most full-fledged organizations. "We should all use what we have for something good, and this is my way of doing something good with the Internet," says the 29-year-old Information Architect who now resides in New York. "Hopefully people will use these weekly e-mails to enhance their lives."

UP AND COMERS

Ethan Tucker

Rabbi Ezra M. Cohen
Joseph N. Wilson
Meir Soloveitchik
Wendy Amsellem

{ What did you think of our list? Send your comments to editor@jewsweek.com.
Read what other people thought in our [Letters to the Editor](#) section.}

(c) 2001 Jewsworld.com

Copyright © 2001 [Jewsworld](#) Inc. All rights reserved.
Help Legal Disclaimers

