



Space Torah Newsletter

Spring 2018

Here's some of what we've been doing...and our plans going forward.

Launching our Website - <http://www.spacetorahproject.com>

It includes: An **Overview** of the project; a **Video Trailer** that tells the essence of the story; and a link to the **Space Torah Page** on the **Center for Independent Documentary** website.

Assembling a Production Team

The website also has a page introducing our production team of highly regarded, award-winning professionals who have the skills to make "Space Torah" a film of lasting value.

Sharing Jeff's story

Over the past year Executive Producer Rachel Raz presented this captivating story at:

- The Institute of Southern Jewish Life Educators' Conference (Jackson, MS):
Title - **"The First Torah in Space, What Lessons Can we Learn from it?"**
- Solomon Schechter Day School (Newton, MA)
To a delighted group of students from **SSDS** and the **Reali School of Haifa, Israel**.
- Temple Emunah (Lexington, MA)
"Jews in Space" with **Janna Kaplan**, Senior Research Associate at Brandeis University's Graybiel Lab, who specializes in Neuropsychology and Space Research.
- Hebrew College, Newton, MA:
The **Early Childhood Jewish Education Conference** with **Dr. Hoffman** as the keynote speaker. The audience of over 200 educators was captivated by his story.

Developing Social Media Content

We've created a **Space Torah Facebook Page**, so we can share news about Jeff and the ongoing progress of our Project. Be sure to "Like" our page and share it with all your Facebook friends.

<https://www.facebook.com/spacetorah/>

Research

- We talked to congregants of Jeff's former synagogue in Texas to learn where the idea of sending a Torah into space came from...and how it required the group effort of members of that community to make it happen.
- We contacted Rabbi Shaul Osadchey (the officiating rabbi who came up with the Space Torah idea), who shared his memories and newspaper articles about the story.
- We spoke with Tami Lehman-Wilzig who documents the story of Israeli astronaut Ilan Ramon z"l bringing along a Torah that had survived the Holocaust on his Space Shuttle flight in her exceptional children's book, *Keeping the Promise*.
- We've also met several times with Dr. Hoffman, compiling articles about his work, transferring his video footage from the Space Shuttle, and examining photos and other artifacts. The more we learn about his story, the more we are inspired by it.

Themes

Among the themes we've identified so far are:

- **You can Live your Dreams** - a child from an immigrant family who dreamed of reaching the stars. We will follow the path that allowed him to get there.
- An **American Jewish community working together** can do great things...even providing a "launching pad" for the Space Torah, as Jeff's synagogue did.
- How so much of human history is about journeys through time and space – usually **bringing our most sacred traditions with us**, humanizing and sanctifying the new worlds we encounter on our explorations.
- The inevitable **connection between science and religion**. It was science and technology that brought for Dr. Hoffman to this unique religious moment.

...and we're sure to uncover other significant themes as we learn more about the five Space Shuttle missions during which Jeff brought mezuzot (which he put on his bunk), dreidels (which seemed to spin forever in mid-air) and the Torah. As commercial space travel comes closer to reality, and world is so divided in so many ways, a film documenting the story of Jeff's journey and the Space Torah has the capacity to inspire all of humanity, no matter our beliefs, reminding us that we are all voyagers on this planet.

Fundraising

The Space Torah Project would like to thank the many individuals who have contributed so far. Your donations helped fund our website, trailer, and initial research. We have more work to do to reach the \$100,000 goal we need to produce a film of broadcast quality...but each significant contribution allows us to take another step forward with the production. For instance, the next \$7500 means we can do the first round of interviews. We give thanks to our three professional fundraisers: **Danny Watt, Carolyn Keller and Ruth Gold**, who are volunteering their time and expertise to help make this project a reality...and wish them great success in their efforts.

What's next?

Come hear Jeff on May 7th in NYC!

At the Opening of the "Jews in Space" exhibition

<https://www.cjh.org/jewsinspace/>

Starting the Production Phase

This summer we will start recording interviews with Jeff and Rabbi Osadchey. The two formed a unique bond while Jeff was in Houston for the NASA program. We are now working to set a time and place, and looking for a visually interesting and thematic location for the interviews. More information to come about this.

Fundraising Status

We need to raise \$25,000 by July so we can progress towards our target delivery date of spring, 2019. Please join us to ensure that this inspiring story will be preserved and shared. If you already made your contribution, please invite other friends, colleagues and family members to join you. Every contribution counts, but we are especially looking for:

- ❖ **3 sponsors at \$10,000 (Universe)**
- ❖ **5 sponsors at \$5,000 (Galaxy)**
- ❖ **10 sponsors at \$1,000 (Solar System)**

We will be adding a page of "sponsors" to our website later this summer to highlight our wonderful contributors. Donors at *sponsorship* levels will also be in the film credits.

All donations are tax-deductible through the auspices of the 501(c)3 **Center for Independent Documentary**. You can link to the Space Torah Project Donations page on their site by visiting <http://www.spacetorahproject.com>.

If you can, write a check, so there is no electronic transaction fee, and your entire donation can go to the project. To do so, please mail it to:

**Center for Independent Documentary
1300 Soldiers Field Rd / Suite #4
Boston, MA 02135**

Please write Space Torah Project on the memo line.

...and please be in touch if you have any questions, suggestions or ideas.

Rachel Raz, Executive Producer and the project team.

spacetorah@gmail.com

