



NASA ASTRONAUT MARKS JEWISH AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH TO CARRY ORIGINAL PROCLAMATION INTO ORBIT

APRIL 2006 PROCLAMATION CREATED JEWISH AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

May 3, 2010, 4 PM (EST)—NASA astronaut Garrett E. Reisman—the first Jewish crew member on the International Space Station—will be carrying the official proclamation creating Jewish American Heritage Month (JAHM) into space with him when the Space Shuttle Atlantis launches in May 14 from the Kennedy Space Center. Reisman will be taking into the atmosphere in a matter of days, a document representing the aspirations of millions of Jews who made arduous journeys over countless miles for the promise of American freedom.

Interviewed minutes ago by telephone, Reisman confirmed that the proclamation which was signed by President Bush in 2006, was part of the Official Flight Kit (OFK) and had already been loaded onto the Atlantis. While seemingly proud of the fact that he would be taking such an important document into space, Reisman expressed disappointment at the fact that he had to fold the document, explaining that all items were required to meet certain storage requirements due to the tight space restrictions.

While he is honored for his role as a Jewish American involved in the space program, Reisman quickly deflected attention from himself stating that, “I’m not the first, but one of many in a long line of Jewish Americans who have been deeply involved in the space program.” He pointed to specific contributions by David Wolf – the first Jewish American who was part of the Russian-American crew on the space station MIR and Judy Resnik, who he referred to as a ‘pathfinder.’

“The timing is perfect,” said Reisman, referring to the fact that his mission launch date coincided with the celebration of Jewish American Heritage Month.

After Mr. Reisman returns the proclamation from space, the Jewish Museum of Florida will donate it to the National Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia, where it will be on display at the new building on Independence Mall. Mr. Reisman is scheduled to turn the proclamation over to the Museum during a Jewish American Heritage Month event late this spring.

“On behalf of the National Museum of American Jewish History and Jewish American Heritage Month, we are honored that Garrett Reisman will be taking the proclamation into space on his shuttle journey. Jews and people from all backgrounds and religions have come to America because it offered the promise of opportunity. The shuttle flight represents American achievement, what we can achieve as a people, given the opportunity and freedoms afforded us

by the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution,” said Museum President and CEO Michael Rosenzweig.

“With the Museum’s proximity to the founding documents created on Independence Mall, we will proudly display the proclamation that Garrett Reisman is carrying into space for us.”

By Congressional resolution and Presidential proclamation, May is Jewish American Heritage Month. President George W. Bush proclaimed the first celebration in May 2006. The announcement was the culmination of an effort by the Jewish Museum of Florida and South Florida Jewish community leaders that resulted in resolutions introduced by Representative Debbie Wasserman Schultz of Florida and Senator Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania urging the President to proclaim a month that would honor the more than 350-year history of Jewish contributions to American culture. The resolutions passed unanimously, first in the House of Representatives in December 2005 and later in the Senate in February 2006.

“I’m delighted that the Jewish Museum of Florida and the National Museum of American Jewish History are joining with Jewish American Heritage Month on this collaboration that helps tell the story of how American Jews have contributed to our nation’s history,” said Marcia Zerivitz, the founding executive director of the Jewish Museum of Florida.

The JAHM Coalition was formed in March 2007 and convened by United Jewish Communities (now The Jewish Federations of North America), The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives (AJA) and the American Jewish Historical Society (AJHS). The JAHM Coalition is composed of the directors of major national Jewish historical and cultural organizations including the AJA, AJHS, Jewish Women’s Archive, the National Museum of American Jewish History, the Council of American Jewish Museums, and the Jewish Historical Society of Washington, D.C. In 2009, the JAHM Coalition welcomed The Manischewitz Company as a corporate sponsor and received federal funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

The National Museum of American Jewish History is constructing a new 100,000–square-foot, five-story building, designed by Polshek Partnership Architects. The new Museum building will stand directly across from the Liberty Bell, a block south of the National Constitution Center, and one block north of the birthplace of American liberty: Independence Hall. The new building, which will serve as a cornerstone of the modern-day American Jewish community and a source of national pride, will open in 2010.

The National Museum of American Jewish History is dedicated to telling the still-unfolding story of Jews in America, who embraced freedom with its choices and challenges as they shaped and were shaped by our nation. The Museum envisions its new home as a place that welcomes all people, inviting them to discover what they have in common with the Jewish experience in America, as well as to explore the features that make this history distinctive.

###