

Stuff you knew - or thought you knew - about Jewish Astronauts

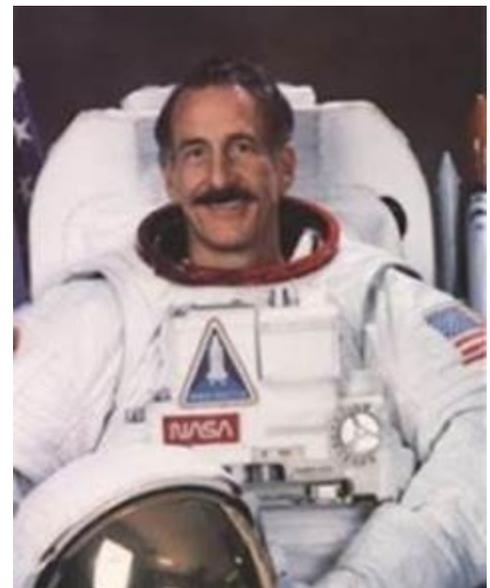


Boris Volynov was the first Jew in space. He was the commander of Soyuz 5 in January 1969.



Judy Resnick, was the first American Jewish astronaut to go into space. She served as mission specialist on the maiden voyage of the Space Shuttle Discovery in 1984 and also on the Challenger. She died tragically when the Challenger broke apart shortly after liftoff for its 10th mission. She consulted a rabbi about lighting Shabbat candles aboard the Space Shuttle. Of course, an open flame was not permitted, so she was advised to use electric lights at the proper hour corresponding to the onset of Shabbat at their home base, in Houston

Jeffrey Hoffman was the first Jewish man in space and the first person to ever bring a Torah into space. He did this during his 1996 mission on the Space Shuttle Columbia .





David Wolf, was in orbit during Hanukkah and, though he couldn't light his menorah due to the hazards of fire in an oxygen-rich atmosphere, he did take advantage of zero gravity when spinning his dreidels. "I probably have the record dreidel spin," he later said, "it went for about an hour and a half until I lost it. It showed up a few weeks later in an air filter. I figure it went about 25,000 miles."

Gregory Chamitoff , in 2008. He took mezuzot shaped like rockets on to the International Space Station and placed them on the door post near his bunk bed.



Ilan Ramon was the first Israeli astronaut. He was the payload specialist on the Space Shuttle Columbia and, sadly, he died along with his crew mates when the Columbia disintegrated during re-entry over Southern Texas .. But during his career as an astronaut Judaism was a prominent part of his life in space. He was the first astronaut to request kosher food in space and also the first one to consult a rabbi about how to observe Shabbat while in orbit. In addition to a Torah scroll and microfiche copy of the bible, he also carried a picture of Earth as seen from the moon that was drawn by a Jewish boy in a concentration camp during World War II.



Gary Reisman, who was the first Jewish astronaut to live on the International Space Station, and who brought a memento from Ilan Ramon's widow with him.

He left right before Passover and asked if he could bring matzah with him, but, alas, mission control thought the crumbs would be uncontrollable.

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(Reisman is a self-proclaimed member of the Colbert Nation and had a cameo appearance on the series finale of Battlestar Galactica).**

**Actually Yuri Gagarin was the first Jewish man in space. He flew into orbit aboard the Soviet spacecraft Vostok I on 12 April 1961.
He never told anyone he was Jewish**