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August, 2026

Israeli innovation meets Calgary Stampede

By Maxine Fischbein, LJI Reporter

His Excellency, Iddo Moed, State of Israel Ambassador to Canada, visited Calgary for an action-packed six days during the Calgary Stampede last month. Highlights included five events organized and/or hosted by the Israeli Embassy featuring talented entrepreneurs representing six Israeli start-up companies in a range of fields including Artificial Intelligence, cybersecurity, agriculture, infrastructure, and defence.

Highlights included a reception, a cyber security tabletop exercise, an innovation workshop, a pitching event, and a Stampede BBQ hosted by Senator Daryl Fridhandler and his wife Ellen on July 6 that brought together politicians and leaders in academia, business, tech, and innovation.

In addition to Ambassador Moed, other dignitaries in attendance at the Fridhandler Stampede soiree included His Excellency Pete Hoekstra, the US Ambassador to Canada; US Consul General Emily Fleckner; Edmonton Senator Christopher Wells; Former Liberal MP and Justice Minister Ann McLellan; Toronto-St. Paul's MP Leslie Church; Former Conservative and current Liberal Toronto Markham-Unionville MP Michael Ma; Calgary-Confederation MP Corey Hogan; Calgary-Heritage MP Shuvaloy Majumdar; Calgary-Elbow MLA Samir Kayande; Calgary Mayor Jeromy Farkas, former Calgary Mayor Dave Bronconnier; and Calgary Beth Tzedec Congregation Rabbi Russell G. Jayne.

Guests from the University of Calgary included Chancellor John Osler, President and Vice-Chancellor

Israeli dancers celebrate culture, not politics.



On August 3, at the Edmonton Heritage Festival at William Hawrelak Park, the Aviv Dancers joyfully took the stage, overpowering chants from a nearby protest. Historically protests have not occurred at the Festival. Choosing to forgo the long-held tradition that the Festival be about culture, not politics, on this day a group made their presence felt arriving with violent imagery, with at least one protestor harassing the young dancers. The Shiru Ha'Shir Dancers, along with the Aviv Dancers, countless Israel Pavillion volunteers, and allies, all persisted in the face of protest and adversity to make sure the Israel Pavillion, the Heritage Festival, and the performances could all still be enjoyed. Seeing Israeli Dancers perform and prevail, drowning out protest, was the visual definition of the mantra, "We Will Dance Again!"

Dr. Ed McCauley, Board Chair William Sembo, and Guy Levesque, Executive Director of the Hunter Hub for Entrepreneurial Thinking at the U of C.

Other notable guests included Mount Royal University Chancellor Arlene Strom; MRU Political Science Professor and Chair of the Economics, Justice and Policy Studies Department Dr. Duane Bratt; Calgary Chamber of Commerce CEO Deborah Yedlin;

Canada-Israel Chamber of Commerce Executive Director David Friedland; Alberta Innovates CEO Michael Mahon; and Chair and CEO of the Alberta Securities Commission and Chair of the Canadian Securities Administrators Stan Magidson.

Born in Amsterdam, Ambassador Moed has served as a career diplomat for more than 30 years. Since his

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Book your Rosh Hashana Greeting today!

Rosh Hashana is approaching and *AJNews* is once again celebrating with two special editions – one for Calgary and one for Edmonton. We're proud to be the newspaper of the Alberta Jewish Community, publishing interesting and relevant original community news in print, as well as our online weekly "Alberta Jewish Schmooze" which goes right into our readers' inboxes and daily posts on our website and X (formerly known as twitter).

It is more important than ever that we have a community newspaper to connect us and you can show your appreciation by purchasing holiday greetings in the newspaper three times a year – Rosh Hashana, Chanukah, and Passover. There are three sizes available – small for \$36, medium for \$72 and large for \$180 – something to suit any budget. If you enjoy receiving the newspaper each month, this is a great way to let the whole community know it.

Your participation helps us pay for printing and home deliveries to as many people in our communities as possible. It also allows us to give generous discounts to our Jewish organizations to help them advertise their events. With the funds generated from greetings, we are also able to amplify community

activities across the wide spectrum of affiliations in our community. As a service to community members, we also provide further discounts for personal notices of appreciation, announcements of milestones and obituaries.

Each month we also send bundles of newspapers to schools, shuls and other gathering places. In Calgary, newspapers can be picked up at the Paperny Family JCC, Beth Tzedec, Temple B'nai Tikvah, House of Jacob Mikveh Israel, Jewish Family Services Calgary, Calgary Jewish Academy, Halpern Akiva Academy and Chabad of Alberta. They are also available in our Blue Box in front of Glenmore Landing Safeway and at Grumans Delicatessen.

In Edmonton, newspapers can be picked up at Talmud Torah, Bliss Baked Goods, Beth Shalom, Beth Israel, Temple Beth Ora, Jewish Federation of Edmonton office, OPH, Jewish Senior Citizens Centre, Chabad of Edmonton and Jewish Family Services. Also at our Blue Newspaper Box in front of Callingwood Safeway, at the European Market in Callingwood

Shopping Centre and at our Blue Newspaper Box near BMO in Wolf Willow.

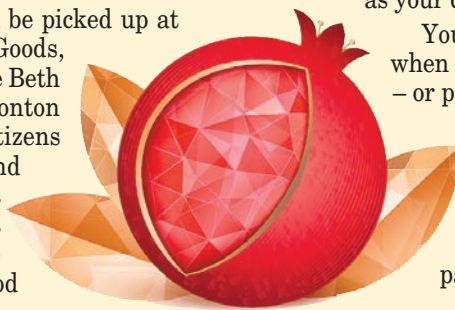
If you've already pre-booked your greetings with us – thank you!

Otherwise in the coming weeks, you will be approached to purchase a greeting in the Alberta Jewish News – by Sandy Fayerman in Calgary or by Dan Moser or Deb Shatz in Edmonton. Please say yes and book the greeting through them, or by calling the office at 780 421-7966 or sending an email to albertajewishnews@gmail.com.

You can also book your greeting online via our website at albertajewishnews.com/greetings. Our booking system allows you to book one holiday at a time or several at once – and the site allows you to specify the size of greeting that you'd like as well as your choice of holiday message.

You can also now pay for greetings when you book them – on a secure site – or pay later with a cheque or eft.

The holidays are a time to connect with family and friends, and this is our way of connecting with each of you. See you soon, on the greeting pages of *Alberta Jewish News*!



Holocaust survivor Harry Gould marks 100th birthday

By Jana Zalmanowitz, LJI Reporter

On June 21, Calgarian Harry Gould celebrated his 100th birthday. Reaching a century is rare. For a Holocaust survivor who went on to build a family, a career and a lifetime of service to his community, it is a milestone that speaks to extraordinary resilience.

Harry was born in Czechoslovakia in 1926. He lived a typical life of a child with his mother, father and older brother Joe. His mother was one of 13 children meaning Harry was surrounded by aunts, uncles and 30 cousins. In 1939, when Nazi Germany invaded, his family was rounded up and eventually sent to the Theresienstadt Ghetto.

It was in the ghetto that Harry started gaining the skills that would help him survive. His uncle, an electrical engineer, taught him electrical skills, knowledge which would serve him later.

Tragically, Harry's parents were sent to Auschwitz, where they were killed. He and his brother were sent to Kaufering, a subcamp of Dachau. It was here that Harry survived by doing electrical work for the camp.

On April 29, 1945, Harry and Joe were on a death march to Allach, another subcamp, when American troops liberated Dachau. They returned to Czechoslovakia where he worked briefly on an uncle's farm and then went on to technical school.

Two years into his 4-year program, Harry had the opportunity to immigrate to Canada, to join Joe in the Toronto area. It was there he met and married his wife of 50 years, Eva, and had his two sons, Paul and Bryan. Harry spent five decades as an electrician,

overseeing major infrastructure projects including subway systems and nuclear generating stations.

Having lost their son, Paul, Harry and Eva moved to Calgary to be with Bryan who had come to work in the energy sector. It was with that move in 1992, that Harry began his retirement.

Retirement became another chapter of service. Harry took it seriously, staying active and contributing to his community. He volunteered at Heritage Park, helping maintain vintage vehicles in Gasoline Alley. He delivered Meals on Wheels for 12 years and welcomed visitors at Canada Olympic Park's information centre. Of course, Harry had to stay physically active so he joined a seniors' hiking club. Every Friday they would take a bus to the mountains where they would hike in the summer and snowshoe or cross-country ski in the winter. He retired from the club at the age of 92.

Although he cannot be as physically active as he once was, Harry is still celebrating life. To mark his 100th birthday, Harry gathered with about a dozen family members. Bryan said it was one of the few times he had seen his father visibly emotional and as some may say, the party left Harry a little verklempt.

As a survivor, to see life at 100 years old, with family you have created against all odds must be a feeling that's hard to describe. When asked what he feels



Harry Gould (far right) celebrated his 100th birthday with family this past June.

about being a century old, Harry says, "It feels good." Elaborating, he shows gratitude for simple things. "I can still move around. I can see my family."

Harry Gould's life is a testament not only to survival but to perseverance. He endured unimaginable loss, built a family, enjoyed a long career and spent his retirement giving back to his community. In a century marked by tragedy and triumph, his life stands as a quiet but powerful expression of resilience. "By all accounts, he shouldn't be here," Bryan says. Yet at 100, Harry remains here, living a beautiful life.

A tale of three Bernards and the stories we tell in the Little Synagogue

By Irena Karshenbaum, LJI Reporter

On Sunday, July 19, 2026, renowned Canadian military historian, frequent commentator about the country's defence policies, Dr. David Bercuson, who has taught history at the University of Calgary since 1970 and is the founding director of the school's Centre for Military, Security and Strategic Studies, presented a special talk in the Montefiore Institute (aka the

Little Synagogue) at Heritage Park Historical Village. The story extended beyond the professor's usual subject, focusing on his family's history entitled, *The Bercuson Family in Calgary*.

The farmers who homesteaded in the Montefiore Colony – reaching a population of 77 at its peak – where the Montefiore Institute once stood, arrived in the area of eastern Alberta in 1910 from Russia and Romania, as we tell our visitors, but we do not know where exactly they came from.

This is not the case with Dr. Bercuson's history as the family does know the exact place where they draw their roots, from, Panciu, in the foothills of the eastern Carpathian Mountains, in Romania.

Dr. Bercuson described the region as, "Known for its Romanian wines and had a Jewish population around the turn of the twentieth century of some 677 people." He said, "Although not numerous, the Jews of Panciu were engaged primarily in small scale commerce and lived lives of semi-poverty, but relative safety."

Dr. Bercuson took the audience through two centuries of history that spanned Europe, North America and Israel as seen through the eyes of his

family's story.

He explained, "The original name of the family was Bercovici, a common name in east central Europe, which means the son of Berco. Berco, or Berish, had been born in Romania about 1835. He was a *schochet*, as was his son, Gershon, who was born about 1855."

Jack Bercovici arrived in Calgary with two brothers, possibly Herman and Harry, in 1902 or 1903. One brother and two sisters remained in Romania.

He recounted, "It is said that the three brothers, peddled their way behind a push cart to Hamburg, or maybe one of the Black Sea ports, where they purchased passage to Canada aboard a CPR steamship. Why Canada? Why the CPR? That was the time of the great migration of eastern and central European Jews to Wilfred Laurier's Canada and, of course, to the United States. Steamship ticket brokers fell over themselves to attract customers and the three Bercovici boys sailed for Halifax."

The fourth brother, Solomon (Dr. Bercuson's grandfather), he continued, "Followed a year or two after." Solomon found work at BESCO – the British Empire Steel Corporation – a Nova Scotia steel mill, then became a news clerk with the National Transcontinental Railway, which later was incorporated into the Canadian National Railways. "He sold newspapers, pop, candy bars on the trains running between Halifax and Winnipeg before joining his brothers in Calgary around 1908."

Continued on page 7



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and great grandfather
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on Sunday, August 30, 2026
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at Erlton Cemetery
in Calgary.

Following the service attendees
are invited for lunch
at the Carriage House Hotel.

Summer fun for kids in Calgary at Camp JCC



Calgary kiddos are having a wonderful summer in the city, at Camp JCC, located at the Paperny Family JCC.

Chevra Kadisha of Calgary to unveil Memorial Sculpture and new Gan Hazikaron

By AJNews Staff

On August 23, the Chevra Kadisha of Calgary will be publicly opening their Gan Hazikaron (Garden of Remembrance) at the Erlton Cemetery. The Garden is a dedicated beautifully landscaped area set apart from the gravesites where mourners can visit with family and friends and still be near their departed loved ones. There will be benches in the garden where visitors can take their time to reconnect with friends and remember those who have passed.

In the Garden, Chevra Kadisha will unveil a sculpture dedicated to the memory of those who perished in the tragedy of October 7, 2023 and in

the ensuing conflict. An original piece of art has been created by Jewish artist Charles Sherman. This sculpture will be a unique memorial to the worst massacre of Jews since the Holocaust.

Another feature of the Garden is to provide Kohanim a place where they can go to attend funerals and unveilings and still comply with the Biblical prohibition to remain a certain distance from gravesites.

When members of our community gather at a cemetery to pay respects to a departed loved one, they often encounter friends they have not seen in a while. Naturally, they begin to reconnect. A little known aspect of Jewish cemetery etiquette is to refrain from behaviours that the departed can no longer perform, such as socializing. The Chevra Kadisha of Calgary has undertaken this initiative to give mourners a place where they can reconnect with friends in compliance with this custom and also provide the space to remember those who have passed.

The Chevra Kadisha thanks those individuals and families whose generosity has made the creation of this garden and memorial possible. They will be formally acknowledged in the near future on a donors' board to be erected in the chapel at 37th Street.

The entire community is invited to this dedication which will begin at 11:00 AM on August 23 in the west section of Erlton cemetery.

“ ... grant rest on the wings of the Divine Presence...”

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📅

Sunday, August 23, 2026

🕒

11am

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Erlton Cemetery

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in Gaza when
his company
was targeted
by an anti-tank
missile attack that
killed two and
injured 16.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17
Location to be announced before the event

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Adam Parker’s Mitzvah Ride to support cancer research

By Regan Lipes, LJI Reporter

A bar or bat mitzvah is a sacred right of passage for young Jews as they take on the responsibilities of adult-hood and embrace the mitzvot commanded by G-d. Hollywood has added a twist to how this milestone is portrayed, and beyond the glitz and party-planning, there is a deeply personal journey that the young celebrant undertakes. Regardless of whether the simcha takes place in an Orthodox or Progressive shul, there is always the auspicious moment where the young person, moving into the early stages of adulthood ascends to a new level of maturity.

Recently, *Alberta Jewish News* received a moving letter from a local Edmonton bar mitzvah boy who is taking more than an adult load of responsibility upon himself. Adam Parker, who has been studying diligently for his bar mitzvah with Rabbah Gila Caine from Temple Beth Ora, has devoted his energies to biking for a cure. “I’m biking to support people battling cancer,” explained Adam. “I’ve joined Wellspring Cancer Support and will be cycling 25 kilometers as part of Wellspring’s event in Banff, Alberta on September 12, 2026. I’ve named my project Adam’s Mitzvah Ride.”

Adam’s dedication to this cause is deeply personal in inspiration. “I decided on this project because my Zaida, Earl Parker, of blessed memory, unfortunately passed away in 2014 due to a lost battle with blood cancer and my other grandfather in Poland is currently battling bladder cancer.” Adam may not remember his Zaida, but he has many pictures to hold near and dear. Now, as his maternal grandfather bravely faces the disease, Adam is able to comprehend the gravity of this struggle with an adult’s consciousness having reached bar mitzvah age.

“The idea was his own,” his mother Asia told *AJNews* with a mix of bashful humility and the sort of pride only a kvelling mother can feel. “We just guided him with questions along the way, and he put the rest of the pieces together himself.” During a phone interview from Poland while visiting her parents Asia explained that first Adam had the idea to do something for cancer research, and that it was through his own ingenuity and initiative that he found the

appropriate cycling event. “Last summer his bike became his key to freedom. He was old enough to go off on his bike independently with his friends, and it was a pretty special time to see him maturing. I think that’s why it’s meaningful that he’s cycling as a part of his project.”

This same maturity has only grown in the past year, and now it is not only Adam’s parents who are marvelling at his sense of *Tikkun Olam*. “What Adam is doing now was not part of our b’nai mitzvah classes,” clarified Rabbah Gila Caine. “Of course we talk about what it means to build community, and we undertake larger projects as a group, but Adam has taken this to an even greater level.”

Rabbah Caine holds b’nai mitzvah classes each year for boys and girls, but this is also a time for parents to get involved. “This way the kids get to know each other, but so do the parents. Instead of only learning from me, we can all learn together. This can be a chance for families to get to know members of our shul in a lasting way, and for parents and children to form deeper bonds,” she explained thoughtfully. “Adam has really impressed me with his sense of community.”

“It was Adam himself who came up with the idea of contacting the *Alberta Jewish News*,” explained Asia. “I told him I could support him by reading the email he’d drafted, and I let him use my email address, but really it all came from him.” A young Edmonton Jewish community member of barely thirteen envisioned such a large-scale project and pursued it with the same zeal he intends harness for his big upcoming ride.

“I’m turning to my community in hopes of asking for people to contribute to my fundraising,” wrote Adam. He is grateful for all gestures of support but is definitely thinking big picture with dreams of doing his part to better the lives of those facing cancer. It might be a drop in the bucket, or even more like a drop in a great big ocean, but Adam knows that it takes lots of little drops to make waves, and he’s determined.

All contributions are greatly appreciated, and those interested in contributing to Adam’s bar mitzvah project can do so at: <https://give.wellspring.ca/fundraisers/adamparker>. “We all wish his Zaida was with us to celebrate his bar mitzvah,” said Asia softly.



Adam Parker's Mitzvah Ride will support cancer research.

“We have pictures of them together from Adam’s brit milah, and his first birthday, and he’d be so proud to see than man he’s becoming.”

When asked about her father ‘s reaction to hearing about Adam’s deep sense of social responsibility to be the change he wishes to see in the world, Asia replied: “He’s not a man who shows a lot of emotion, or says a lot when he’s touched, but I know how impressed he is and how moved he is by what Adam is doing.”

Adam will be hitting the pavement full throttle after his big day, but he will absolutely not lose momentum. Rabbah Caine has never required an independent project as part of the TBO B’nai Mitzvah programme, but she encourages all youth inspired by Adam’s vision and passion to also explore what they can do to repair the world around them. The entire Edmonton Jewish community wishes Adam Parker, his proud parents, and adoring grandparents a hearty mazel tov!

Spiritual transformation at the Edmonton Mikvah

By Regan Lipes, LJI Reporter

“What is as holy as Yom Kippur, as powerful as prayer and the secret of a spiritually dynamic

marriage? You may not believe it, but the answer is: the mikvah. Water has a mystical quality. It is fundamental to the survival and growth of all living beings, and has the power to restore, cleanse, and refresh.

A mikvah is a collection of water in which one immerses for spiritual purity and renewal. Oceans, rivers, and springs are Mikvahs in their most natural form, but for millennia, man-made mikvah pools – built according to complex halakhic (Jewish law) specifications – have provided safer and more beautiful conditions.

The Torah prescribes many occasions for immersion in a Mikvah – for example, in the days of the Holy Temple, it was an integral part of the Yom Kippur service. Today, a mikvah’s primary function is for women in the context of Family Purity, as well as for converts in their final stage of embracing Judaism. Additionally, some men have the custom of immersing in a mikvah “as a spiritual boost before an auspicious occasion,” according to trusted online resource Mikvah.org.

Many Jewish women know of the mikvah, and some may have even visited one before their chuppah. “I’ve heard from many women who say they went before getting married, but that it was either an awkward experience, or just something they weren’t eager to repeat,” explained one of Edmonton’s dedicated Mikvah Ladies, Nina Bernstein. “Because we hear this from so many women, we pay very special attention to making sure that women who come to us

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EDMONTON TALMUD TORAH SOCIETY
תלמוד תורה כנגד כולם

THANK YOU

The Talmud Torah Society is deeply grateful for the continued support of the Edmonton Jewish Community Charitable Foundation (EJCCF). Led by Chair Stephanie Hendin, EJCCF’s annual grant program plays a vital role in supporting our educational priorities. This year, the Foundation generously funded enhancements to our Hebrew Language Arts program for students in Grades 1–6.

We thank EJCCF for its enduring partnership and commitment to fostering meaningful Hebrew language learning opportunities for our students.

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That is why this relationship matters so much. It is not only about emergency response, although that remains essential. It is about building the people-to-people connections that sustain Jewish life in both directions. In Edmonton, the Shinshin program is a powerful example: Israeli teens spend a year in our community, sharing their lives, stories, Hebrew, culture and love of Israel with our children, schools, camps and families. They become a living bridge, helping our community know Israel not as an idea, but through real relationships. Strengthening those local connections is how we ensure that the bond and Jewish responsibility for each other, between Edmonton, Canadian Jewish communities, and Israel remains vibrant, resilient and deeply human.

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Three Bernards *Cont. from page 2*

Dr. Bercuson explained, “Jack was the patriarch of the family.” Jack married Sarah Hart of Calgary in 1906 and the couple had four children: Joe, Passie (who later married Sam Hector), Leonard and Bernard (born in 1916).

Jack opened a dry goods store on 8th Avenue East, in Calgary, and, “At one point had three store fronts very close together, which were operated by him and his brothers. Jack was very active in the small Jewish community, being a founder of the House of Jacob in 1909.”

Jack’s men’s wear store did not survive the Great Depression. Dr. Bercuson described how he has a 1933 ad from the *Calgary Herald* that announced, “Bercuson Throws Bomb,” which told readers of the store’s bankruptcy sale. “After the bankruptcy, Jack and Sarah left Calgary for Montreal where they stayed for a few years before returning to Calgary. Both are buried in the Erlton Jewish cemetery.”

Bernard, who had attended Western Canada High School, joined the Second Battalion of the Calgary Highlanders on the outbreak of the war. He continued, “Bernard’s mother did not want him to join the RCAF, but join he did, entering the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan. He went through the usual stages of flight training moving to small air bases in Alberta and Saskatchewan. He specialized in radio operations. But as a radio operator on a bomber, he was also trained as an aerial gunner. In the event that one of the three main gunners on the bombers was incapacitated, Bernard was to fill his position and operate one of the bomber’s three-gun turrets.”

On the afternoon of August 16, 1944, Halifax No. MZ899 took off from Yorkshire and in the early morning hours of August 17, 1944, the Halifax bomber, on a night mission to drop sea mines into the Bay of Kiel, was shot down by a German night fighter. Bernard was killed along with six other crew members.

He recounted how the four immigrant brothers were not together for long when they first arrived in Calgary. Jack’s younger brother, Herman, married Hattie in Montreal, then returned to Calgary until May 1916, then left for Windsor, Detroit, then Miami. The couple had four children: Gertrude, Jack, Saul and Bernard, who never married and went into the hotel business.

“At one point, he [Bernard] owned two establishments on Miami Beach: the Aztec Vacation Motel and the Singapore Hotel both on Collins Avenue. The last of these was owned in conjunction with a gentleman named, Meyer Lansky, who took his breakfast at the Singapore everyday. He was an avid collector of paintings and pottery including pieces from Pablo Picasso.”

Before the First World War, Solomon moved to Montreal where he worked in a textile factory and where his new wife, Dora, and he had four children: Anne, Joseph (Dr. Bercuson’s father), Bernard (born in 1920), and Norman.

“Wherever you find a Bercuson, you will find a Bernard,” he explained. “My second cousin, Ellen Barberie, who did most of the spadework for this family history, believes that this was because the first Bercovici she found in the family tree was Berish Bercovici. For some reason Berish became Bernard in later generations. Thus my uncle in Montreal was Bernard, my cousin in Calgary was Bernard, and the hotel entrepreneur in Miami was Bernard and there was eventually a fourth Bernard.”

He recounted, “My dad went to McGill to study engineering, but never completed the course. He then went to work for RCA Victor in Montreal on Canadian

radar during the war, joined the reserve army and married my mother, Sylvia Green, from Brooklyn in August 1942. I was born two days before Japan formally surrendered on September 2, 1945.”

Dr. Bercuson explained how his father’s younger brother, Bernard, joined the Royal Canadian Air Force in October 1940, “He was eventually assigned to No. 25 Operational Training Unit as a Wireless Air Gunner with the rank of Sergeant. These OTUs flew training operations over the UK, but sometimes were sent on bombing missions over the occupied continent. In June 1942, Bernard climbed into a twin engine Wellington for a night mission. His plane was badly shot up by a German night fighter, but just managed to make it back to the UK where it crashed. Three of the crew were killed. Bernard was badly wounded and spent months in a hospital. He returned to Canada with an honourable discharge in 1945.”

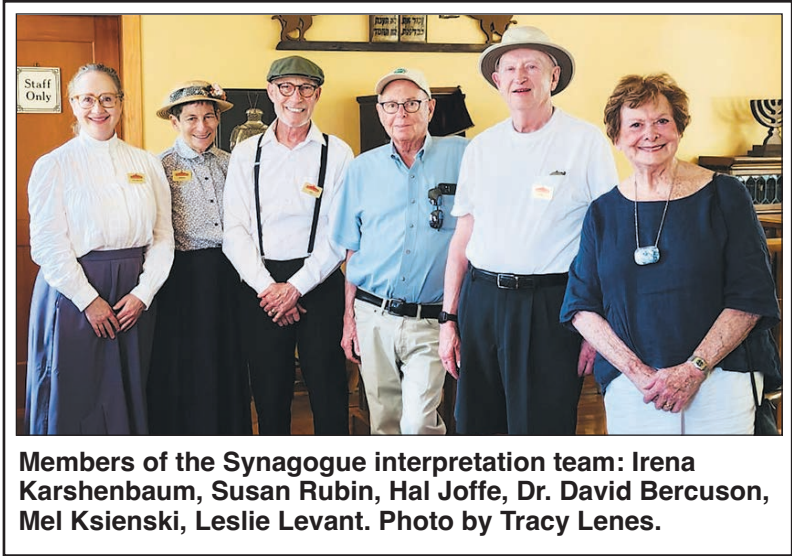
Dr. Bercuson continued, “The Bercovici family that remained in Romania, survived the Holocaust because of Marshal Ion Antonescu, the fascist dictator of Romania who was an ally of Adolf Hitler. For some reason, Antonescu, no friend of Jews, allowed the Nazis to do what they pleased with Jews from the newly acquired territories but would not allow them to seize the Jews from old Romania. Thus, Elie Wiesel and his family, who lived near the border with Ukraine, ended up in Auschwitz. The Bercovici clan who lived near the heart of old Romania were not turned over to the Nazis and survived the war.”

After the Communists came to power, he said, “They made it very clear to the Jewish population that had survived the war that Jews – members of the bourgeoisie – were not wanted in the new People’s Republic of Romania. And so they fled most to Palestine, walking over-land to Burgas, Bulgaria on the Black Sea where the Pan York and the Pan Crescent, two small pass-enger ships, awaited Jewish refugees from Romania and Bulgaria. They boarded the ships in December 1947, sailed through the Bosphorus and into the Mediter-ranean, bound for Palestine.”

He concluded, “Our family story fits within the mass migration of Jews from central and eastern Europe. It is the story of a Jewish family in the twentieth century.”

Dr. Bercuson’s talk was part of a series of special events the Synagogue Advisory Committee now presents on a regular basis during the summer season and for *Once Upon A Christmas*, which in our case is Chanukah.

On May 27, in celebration of Canadian Jewish Heritage Month, we showed the Brazilian documen-tary, *Promised Lands: The Legacy of the*



Members of the Synagogue interpretation team: Irena Karshenbaum, Susan Rubin, Hal Joffe, Dr. David Bercuson, Mel Ksienski, Leslie Levant. Photo by Tracy Lenes.

Baroness and Baron de Hirsch, to bring awareness to the Jewish farming history of Brazil that was part of a global migration, which included Canada. The farmers in both countries received help from the 19th-century philanthropists, Baron Maurice de Hirsch and his wife, Clara.

On June 28, Rabbi Nisan Andrews, from House of Jacob Mikveh Israel, presented a talk, *From Field to Faith: Defining Rest through Labour*, discussing the centrality of Shabbat in Judaism. He opened with his profound explanation, “Shabbos is one of the most important ingredients of Jewish survival. It is no exaggeration to say that the Jew has survived two thousand years of persecution and humiliation largely because he had the Sabbath. It was one factor that not only made him survive, but kept him alive, both spiritually and morally. Without the Sabbath, the Jew would have vanished. It has been said that as much as the Jew has kept Shabbos, so has Shabbos kept the Jew. As long as Judaism exists as a vibrant, vital force, the Sabbath is its most outstanding ritual practice.”

On Sunday, August 16, please join us for the last of our special summer programs, the *1916 Montefiore Institute Dedication Ceremony*, performed at 11:00 am and 2:00 pm. More info: <https://heritagepark.ca/events/montefiore-institute-dedication-ceremony/>

With files from Dr. David Bercuson.

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For change of address, please send both old and new addresses. We welcome your stories, pictures, artwork and opinions. Please send submissions to our office at the address above.

Next Deadline: August 21, 2026

community calendar

Want to know what's going on in Jewish Calgary?
Check out the Community Calendar at jewishcalgary.org

Have an event?
Click on "Suggest an Event" to add it to the calendar

SUMMER MOMENTUM: BUILDING COMMUNITY, LOOKING AHEAD

Summer is often seen as a quieter season, but at Calgary Jewish Federation it has been anything but. As we prepare for an exciting fall, the past month has been filled with meaningful moments that celebrate our community, strengthen our future, and remind us why Federation matters.

Our annual **Spuds and Suds** Stampede breakfast was once again a tremendous success, welcoming **more than 700 Jewish community members and allies** for a boot-stomping good time. It was wonderful to see so many familiar faces alongside new ones, all coming together to celebrate Calgary's greatest tradition with great food, lively conversation, and plenty of community spirit. Events like these remind us that one of Federation's greatest strengths is our ability to bring people together and create connections that endure long after the last pancake has been served.

Behind the scenes, we've also been putting the finishing touches on something that will help shape the future of Jewish Calgary for years to come. Our new **Strategic Plan** is in its final stages and will be unveiled as part of our campaign launch on **September 7** during **Walk with Israel**. This plan reflects months of thoughtful collaboration with community members, volunteers, partners, and staff, and provides a clear roadmap for meeting the evolving needs of our growing community while strengthening Jewish life across Calgary. A special thank you to our Strategic Planning Committee for their leadership and guidance throughout the process.

Walk with Israel promises to be one of the highlights of the year. It will be a day filled with joy, pride, and unity as we gather to celebrate our connection to Israel and to one another. This year's event will include a vibrant **Israel Shuk** as well as a family carnival featuring activities, games, food, and fun for everyone. We encourage everyone to invite friends, neighbours, and colleagues, both Jewish and non-Jewish, to walk alongside us in support of our community and our shared values. Every participant sends a powerful message that Calgary is a place where friendship, understanding, and solidarity flourish.

As we look ahead, we are also preparing for what promises to be an ambitious campaign year. The needs within our community continue to grow, from supporting families and young adults, to enhancing security, combating antisemitism, strengthening Jewish identity, welcoming newcomers, and deepening our connection with Israel. Our new strategic vision gives us an exciting path forward, but achieving it will require the generosity, partnership, and commitment of our entire community. Together, we have an opportunity not simply to respond to today's challenges, but to build an even stronger Jewish future for tomorrow.

There is a beautiful teaching in *Pirkei Avot* that says: **"It is not your duty to finish the work, but neither are you free to desist from it."** Every generation inherits the responsibility to strengthen the Jewish community for those who come next. We may not accomplish everything in a single year, but every act of generosity, every volunteer hour, every event attended, and every new relationship built becomes part of something much larger than ourselves.

Thank you for being part of that journey. We look forward to celebrating with you at Walk with Israel and embarking together on an exciting new chapter for Calgary Jewish Federation.

B'Shalom,

Rob Nagus
CEO, Calgary Jewish Federation

Building an inclusive community is a priority. Contact us and we will make every effort to meet your needs.

Survivor and Volunteer APPRECIATION TEA

On July 14, approximately 60 Holocaust survivors and volunteers from Calgary Jewish Federation's Holocaust and Human Rights: Remembrance and Education department gathered for an afternoon tea of appreciation. Guests enjoyed refreshments from Karen's Café and a multilingual musical performance led by CJF's Inclusion Manager, Karina Szulc, with a surprise song by JFSC's Antonina Taskaev.

We are deeply grateful to our volunteers, donors, survivors, and our partners at JFSC for making this special afternoon possible.

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Questions? Contact Shirel Barlev at sbarlev@jewishcalgary.org or 825-962-7256

The **Integrated Bursary Program (IBP)** ensures that financial challenges never prevent families from accessing the opportunities that strengthen Jewish identity, connection, and belonging. By helping make Jewish day school and camp more affordable, IBP opens the door to transformative educational experiences and meaningful participation in community life.

This year, IBP provided vital support to 63 families, including 82 students and 45 campers. By reducing financial barriers, the program enables children and families to build lasting friendships, deepen their connection to Jewish life, and fully engage in our vibrant community.

The IBP program is also supported through the *Rogers Birdies for Kids* presented by AltaLink program. Community donations made before August 31 are matched by up to 50%, helping more families access the programs and experiences that enrich Jewish life and strengthen our community for generations to come.

I would like to sincerely thank you for supporting our family with a bursary. Your assistance, over the past 10 years, has made it possible for our daughter to attend Camp BB, JCC camps, and The Calgary Jewish Academy – opportunities that would not have been possible otherwise.

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2026

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- Strengthening the places where we gather, celebrate, learn, and belong
- Creating opportunities to live Jewishly with pride and confidence
- Standing stronger and more visible in the face of challenge

Because Jewish life is strongest when we live it together.











...THAT'S FEDERATION

Alberta’s Jewish Sheriff and his K9 partner Seamus

By Shael Gelfand

What could patrolling Israel’s most dangerous borders as a member of the Israeli Defence Forces have in common with patrolling provincial highways as member of the Alberta Sheriff Highway Patrol? For 31-year-old Sazar Sandrusi that common denominator is dogs. Of course, not just any dogs, but highly trained K9 partners helping soldiers and law enforcement officers on opposite sides of the world.

Based in Calgary, Sandrusi has been an Alberta Sheriff for four and a half years and with his K9 Partner Seamus, part of the Alberta Sheriff’s Interdiction Patrol team. Dogs are a central part of the team that specializes in provincial border security and anti-trafficking initiatives to help keep our border safe.

“Seamus is a nearly three-year-old Belgian Malinois,” says Sandrusi. “The first K9 ever deployed by the Alberta Sheriffs.”

They have been partners for almost two years. “Seamus has a strong work ethic,” says Sandrusi, “High drive, and is always eager to earn his reward,” adding that “constant training and operational readiness are critical for the job.”

As members of the Alberta Sheriffs K9 Unit, Sandrusi, Seamus and their team patrol Alberta’s highways. “Our primary mission is to disrupt criminal activity,” says Sandrusi, “by interdicting narcotics, combating human trafficking, and detecting illegal firearms on major transportation corridors.”

On patrol with a K9 partner is nothing new for Sheriff Sandrusi. Born and raised in Ber Sheba Israel, he was a member of the IDF’s fabled Oketz, the elite canine special forces unit specializing in counterterrorism, search and rescue, and explosive detection. He was also one of the unit’s fitness instructors.

“My service in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), along with being born and raised in Israel, has had the greatest influence on who I am today,” says Sandrusi. “Those experiences instilled the values of discipline, integrity, accountability, and commitment to excellence. The high standards and strong work ethic that are emphasized in Israeli culture continue to guide both my personal life and my approach

to policing.”

Sandrusi, who has a Bachelor’s Degree in criminal justice from Mount Royal University, is the only Jewish member of Alberta Sheriffs. He moved to Calgary in 2015 to be with his family who had all emigrated from Israel. His father served as a high-ranking staff officer in the IDF. His mother Sharon Fraiman, with multiple Masters Degrees, was an accomplished educator and curriculum builder in Be’er Sheba, and is now the dynamic Western Region Director, Major Gifts for Canadian Magen David Adom, the donor supported Israeli ambulance service. Sazar’s sister Roni is the General Manager of a major Toronto restaurant.

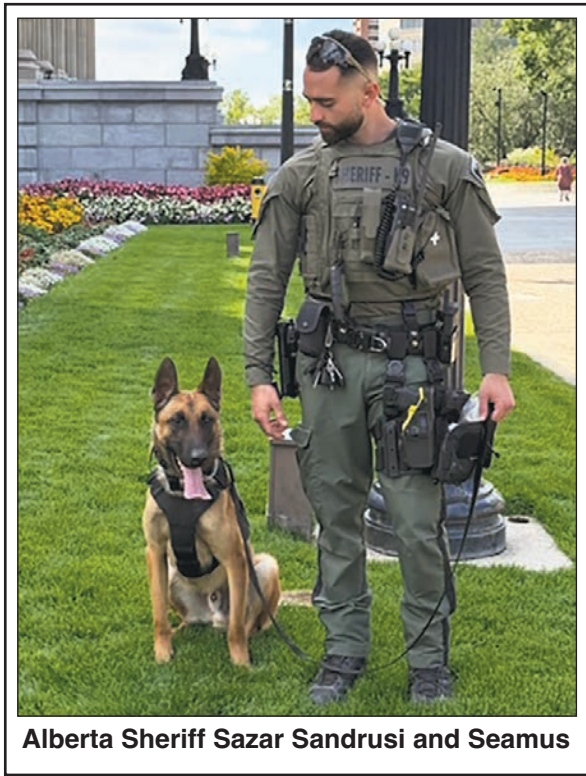
“Sazar is a great son,” says Fraiman, “And always volunteers for our CMDA Galas and many other community events. Giving back is something he learned from his family.”

Sandrusi’s grandparents, Chaim and Josette Fraiman, both with PhDs in education, developed and inaugurated the education system in Be’er Sheba, influencing many generations of students and kids. Josette Fraiman was awarded the Wolf Prize, an international award given in Israel for achievements in science and arts.

Sazar Sandrusi uses his career and K9 partner Seamus to connect with the community. “Demonstrating the relationship between a handler and their K9 helps people see another side of policing,” says Sandrusi, “And reminds them that law enforcement officers are human, with personalities and meaningful connections to the work they do.”

Sandrusi’s friends speak highly of him. “Sazar is one of the most genuine, dependable, and thoughtful people I know,” says Cholwe Beleze. “He is very much a “by the book” person. He believes in doing things the right way, even when it’s the harder or less convenient option. Whether it’s at work, keeping commitments, or helping others, he values integrity and accountability... He genuinely cares about others and doesn’t seek recognition for the good things he does, but he’s always willing to lend a hand or offer support when someone needs it.”

Udi Assayag adds, “One of the things I appreciate the most about Sazar is his dedication to his career



and the pride he takes of his accomplishments in his K9 unit.

“He’s an ambitious guy that takes all the right steps to advance and develop his career.

“On a personal level, you won’t find a better friend. He always knows the right thing to say and will offer the best advice...We need more people like him!”

Sandrusi is dedicated to building his relationship with Seamus and growing and developing the Alberta Sheriff K9 Unit and taking a leadership position. Staying fit and keeping healthy are priorities for Sazar, and when he’s not on duty, he likes travel, food experiences and spending time with family and friends.

As for Seamus, when he’s off duty, he enjoys playing with his chew toys and relaxing. “Watching him mature into a capable working dog has been one of the most rewarding parts of my career,” says Sandrusi.

Picklefest founder says the secret ingredient isn't pickles, it's people.

By David Sklar, LJI Reporter

What started as an unexpected discovery on the streets of New York has grown into a celebration of food, family and community that is now spreading across Canada.

More than a decade ago, Adin Wener stumbled across a pickle festival while visiting New York with his cousin. Watching thousands of people celebrate something as simple as pickles sparked an idea. "I'd never seen people happier," Wener recalled on the *Chai There* podcast. "I turned to my wife and said, 'I have to bring this to Toronto.'"

Today, Picklefest has expanded beyond Ontario and is making its Calgary debut this summer and its Edmonton debut this fall – and there are still vendor opportunities available.

Despite its name, Wener insists the festival isn't really about pickles. "What I love is the human connection and the stories people have about pickles, their families, their grandparents," he said. "It's less about the ferment and more about the human connection people have with pickles."

Those stories often begin with immigration. For many Jewish, Ukrainian, Italian, Korean and countless other families, fermentation wasn't a culinary trend, it was a necessity, preserving food through the winter and creating traditions that were passed from one generation to the next.

"Everybody has a pickle story," Wener said.

His own family has long had its own pickle traditions. Wener recalls his uncle making pickles every year, while his father would bring home jars after the family's annual pickling day. As children, he and his siblings were allowed just one pickle a day, making each one feel special.

Today that family spirit remains central to Picklefest. His wife, Kate, runs the home pickling competition, while their sons have become involved in the family's growing businesses, including Solly's Craft Soda, named after one of them.

"It's been the most fulfilling summer of my life," Wener said of working alongside his family.

One memory, however, stands above the rest.

The first Picklefest took place in Toronto just two weeks after the October 7 attacks in Israel. Wener remembers many members of the Jewish community thanking him for creating a reason to leave their homes, reconnect with friends and simply be together.

"It was a relief," he recalled. "People thanked me for putting something lighthearted on...that brought people together." For Wener, that moment reinforced what Picklefest had become. It wasn't simply a food festival. It was a place where people could reconnect with one another during an extraordinarily difficult time.

The pickles may be the attraction, but for Wener, they're simply the excuse. The real ingredient behind Picklefest has always been people.

To buy tickets and/or for vendor information go to picklefestcanada.com.

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PJ Library Edmonton welcomes families to Popsicles in the Park

By Mira Campbell

Last month, PJ Library's annual Popsicles in the Park event welcomed more than 50 participants to Wedgewood Playground for an afternoon of sunshine, connection, and fun.

The park was bustling with activity as children enjoyed the playground equipment, created summer crafts, blew bubbles, and, of course, cooled off with icy popsicles that provided a welcome break from the heat. The event also welcomed two new families to PJ Library and Jewish life in Edmonton, reflecting the program's role in fostering connection, community and a sense of belonging.

A special highlight of the morning was the attendance of two members of Na'amat—Edmonton Tikvah Chapter President Maya Feldman and a past president Gail Milner—along with their families.

Maya and Gail presented PJ Library programmer Mira Campbell with a generous \$1,500 donation to help enhance PJ Library programming and create additional opportunities for Jewish engagement.

They expressed their appreciation for the important work PJ Library does in fostering Jewish learning, traditions, and relationships through its books and activities. As grandparents, they also value the opportunity to spend quality time with their grandchildren while participating together in Jewish holiday celebrations and other family-focused experiences.

Maya spoke about Na'amat Canada's mission and the organization's longstanding commitment to empowering women, strengthening families, and building resilient communities. She highlighted Na'amat's extensive work in Israel, including the operation of 125 daycare centres, nine technological high schools, youth villages supporting more than 1,000 teenagers, women's and children's centres, and many other vital social service programs.

She also noted that Na'amat Canada's impact extends beyond Israel through numerous initiatives across Canada that support women and children while fostering Jewish identity.

Jewish Federation of Edmonton and PJ Library are



Maya, Gail, Mira and Jana Rae at the Popsicles in the Park program.

grateful for the Edmonton Tikvah Chapter's generous contribution, which will support future opportunities for local participants to connect with Jewish traditions, learning, and one another.

The Sunday morning gathering reflected the spirit of PJ Library, bringing people together through shared experiences while strengthening the relationships and support that help Jewish life thrive in Edmonton.

Edmonton filmmaker brings history to life through award-winning project

By Tammy Vineberg

When Josh Miller first heard the story that would become *The Speech*, it stayed with him.

Decades later, the Edmonton filmmaker is bringing that story to life – and earning recognition as the 2026 recipient of the Earl Parker Award.

The project at the centre of his work, *The Speech*, is an animated short inspired by a true historical incident involving Theodore Roosevelt in 1895, when he served as New York City's police commissioner. The film explores how Roosevelt responded to an antisemitic orator, using humour to challenge hatred while maintaining public order.

For Josh, the power of the story lies in how it communicates a serious message in an unexpected way. "It entertains you; it makes you laugh. But also shows the absurdity of antisemitic tropes," says Josh.

That approach reflects his long-standing passion for storytelling. Growing up in Edmonton, Josh initially pursued music before discovering film. What drew him in was not only the creative side, but the collaborative nature of the industry.

Over time, that interest evolved into a career that took him from the University of Alberta to New York University, and eventually to Los Angeles, where he worked in television and film before returning to Canada to build projects closer to home. Along the way, he developed a deep appreciation for filmmaking as a collective process.

Throughout his career, he has written, produced and developed projects across genres, eventually founding his own production company and contributing to the growth of Edmonton's screen industry.

His connection to the Jewish community also runs deep. Josh served on the board of the Jewish Federation of Edmonton and helped revive the

Edmonton Jewish Film Festival at a critical moment, bringing together volunteers and audiences to relaunch the event.

The spirit of collaboration continues to shape *The Speech*, which blends history and creativity through an animation style inspired by political cartoons of the late 19th century. The story itself uses satire to confront bigotry, a choice that feels particularly relevant in today's climate.

"Bad ideas can be discredited by laughing at them," Josh says.

The project has also begun to attract notable talent. Actor Elliott Gould, known for a decades-long film and television career, has joined the project to voice the character of an elderly rabbi – an opportunity that came together quickly once he read the script.

"He read it and said, 'I absolutely want to be involved'," says Josh.

The recording has already taken place, with Gould completing his voice performance remotely with the creative team.

"He did a fantastic job in bringing the character to life," Josh says.

For Josh, Gould's involvement is more than a casting milestone – it represents an endorsement for the film as it moves toward production.

"These are all things that are now creating a momentum for us," he says.

This sense of momentum is matched by a deeper urgency.

"I felt with the situation as it is today, we all have to do whatever we can," Josh says.

As antisemitism rises globally, he sees the film as one way to respond using the tools he knows best.

For Josh, *The Speech* is just one contribution to a broader Jewish community effort to confront hatred, but an important one.

"With what's going on in the world... this is just sort of one piece of that wider effort," he says.

The Earl Parker Award, presented through the Edmonton Jewish Film Festival, provides both recognition and endorsement for that work. While the financial support is modest, the impact goes beyond the dollar amount.

"It's validation... both for the filmmaker and for the project," Josh says.

That support is especially meaningful at this stage, as Miller and his collaborators work to secure funding and advance production on the animated film.

"The prestige of getting the award... will assist us to be able to realize it," he says.

While the timeline remains dependent on financing, the goal is clear: to complete a high-quality project that will reach audiences through festivals and beyond, sparking conversation and reflection.

For the Jewish Federation of Edmonton, Josh's work shows how visual storytelling can engage audiences, challenge ideas and move people to act. Through *The Speech*, a moment from history becomes a lens for the present – and a reminder that confronting hate can take many forms.

In Josh's case, it starts with adapting a true story – and the decision to use this visual medium will really make a difference.

Tammy Vineberg is Director of Marketing and Communications at Jewish Federation of Edmonton.



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Chesed in YEG for Leo Kazakov

By Regan Lipes, LJI Reporter

Leo Kazakov is a beautiful and happy little boy who just celebrated his first birthday. Surrounded by his loving parents, two older siblings, and a community of friends, he knows he is cherished. The typical milestones to salute the one-year mark were different for Leo. As his mother, Kseniya, explained to *Alberta Jewish News* in a recent interview: “He’s beginning to move his right hand a little to reach for toys, and when we hold him in a specific position, he’s started to hold his head up for a few second by himself.”

At 37-weeks, Kseniya was rushed to the ER, and an emergency C-section was performed. “They monitored me, and I could hear his heart, but they said he wasn’t breathing, and they didn’t know how long he’d been without oxygen.” This was the beginning of a difficult road for Leo and his family. The prolonged depravation of oxygen, a serious cervical spinal cord injury, and a collection of fluid in the brain meant that the newborn baby boy was immediately admitted to the NICU. Before he was even two months, Leo underwent multiple surgeries and battled a subsequent infection. While most families would have been scheduling infant photo sessions, Leo’s parents were camped out at his Stollery crib-side in shifts; it was months before they could even bring him home. “We were so happy when he started breathing on his own,” recalled Kseniya.

“We know that there’s no miracle cure for Leo, but of course we still pray for one,” Kseniya confided. “We want to help him reach his full potential.” Following discharge from the Stollery, the family was referred to rehabilitation services through the Glenrose, but Kseniya, and her husband Dan, were quickly disheartened by the lack of intensive attention Leo received. “After less than an hour of working with him, he’d get a bit fussy, and they’d bring him out to me for a snuggle. I love snuggling with Leo, but we can have that time together at home; I needed them to support us in helping him progress.”

After speaking with other parents navigating the terrifying obstacles of caring for an infirm child, the Kazakov family found a private physical therapy programme. “It’s not covered by Alberta Health, but they show results,” explained Kseniya. “If he gets the focussed attention he needs now, while he’s little, he might be able to regain more motion in his body. We are hoping that he’ll be able to practice holding up his head for longer, then move on to flipping over, and sitting independently.” When the family relocated to Edmonton from Rishon le Zion, Israel in 2022, they could not have imagined the additional hurdles they would need to overcome or how deeply entwined they would become with the over-burdened, under-funded Canadian healthcare system.

The sign of a healthy community is how it supports its members who need the most help; if this is the measure of unity and strength, then Edmonton’s Jewish community is an example to be followed. Business owner, and local community member Eli Salmanov has known the Kazakov family since Dan came to work at ES Services in 2022. “Yes, Dan works for me, but he’s also a dear friend,” said Eli. “I depend on him, and he always comes through for me. Now it’s my turn to come through for him and his family.” Eli, who moved to Edmonton from Eilat, Israel in 2014, and never misses Shacharit at Chabad on Wednesdays, believes strongly in the restorative power of chesed. “Acts of kindness are not just for others but make the people doing the kind deeds uplifted. As Jews, when we can do something to help, it’s a call that needs to be answered.”

Eli took it upon himself to rally the troops. What

began as a GoFundMe account to help the family afford Leo’s private physical therapy, has turned into a community effort. “My wife and I were away when the GoFundMe campaign started, but I forwarded the link to my close friends in the middle of the night, and by morning, they’d all donated, and were organizing a bottle drive.” The spirit of Tikkun Olam is vibrant and flourishing in Edmonton. The news was posted to an Israeli WhatsApp group, and within days gained serious momentum.

“We started by doing a few runs to pick up bottles for recycling from people we knew and reached out to,” explained volunteer Dmitriy Lipes. “Then we started getting messages from people we didn’t even know who just wanted to help. It’s really moving. I’d even say that it’s bringing the Jewish community together in a new way because I’ve been driving to do pick up runs in my own neighborhood and keep discovering Jewish families I didn’t realize lived down the street.” Dmitriy, and another volunteer, Lev Broner, are now recognizable faces at the bottle depot and are coordinating their efforts to keep up with the number of bottle donations. “I blast my Israeli music and roll down the window,” said Dmitriy explaining how he passes the time while collecting bottles. “The Jewish community needs to stick together.”

“It’s very emotional for us not just because we want to do the best for Leo, but because we see how much our community wants the best for him too,” confided Kseniya. “This is what it means to be part of a Jewish community,” emphasized Eli. “We’re stronger because we take care of one another.”

Tzedakah is most commonly known as “charity” but can also be translated as “righteousness” and is a foundational tenant of Judaism. Edmonton may be considered a smaller Jewish community in number, but if the recent outpour of support for Leo is any indication, the population is overflowing with the brightness of this Jewish value. “*Tzedakah* isn’t about how much you give, but that you consciously did something,” emphasized Eli. “We know times are tough, but every little bit is appreciated. If people want to give to the GoFundMe, we appreciate it, but this incredible act of chesed is as easy as sending a WhatsApp message to have your bottles picked up by



Leo Kazakov with his brother and sister.

our volunteers.”

“My husband and I lived in Israel most of our lives,” explained Kseniya. “We were kids when we made *Aliyah*. We both grew up there, served in the military, and started our family in Israel. Coming to Canada was exciting, but scary. It’s always scary when there’s a big risk. With Leo there have been so many scary moments, but everyone always comments about what a happy boy he is, even the doctors after surgery say so. People who’ve never met us, and don’t know Leo are showing so much support. Israel was home for over twenty years but feeling this much love from the Jewish community in Edmonton, makes this new place feel like home too.”

If members of the community would like to arrange to have their empty recyclable bottles picked up for donation to Leo’s ongoing private physical therapy, please message either Eli Salmanov: 780.909.5508, or Lev Broner: 587.501.7851.



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Israeli innovation

Cont. from page 1

arrival in Canada three years ago, he has been outspoken on antisemitism, which spiked dramatically following the murderous attacks of Hamas Terrorists on Israeli civilians on October 7, 2023, which sparked the subsequent war in Gaza.

While antisemitism in Canada remains a primary concern for Moed, his busy six days in Calgary were a good news story highlighting Israeli innovation and forging connections between governments, universities, and businesses in Israel and Alberta.

Lauding Israel’s greatness when it comes to “it’s innovation and start-up businesses,” Senator Fridhandler – who also serves as a Vice Chair of the Canada-Israel Interparliamentary group – is clearly excited about helping to facilitate new and productive channels of communication and cooperation between Canada and Israel in business, tech, and innovation.

“This is a mutual best interest proposition, a win-win,” Fridhandler told *AJNews*.

The ambassador says that Calgary is the place where he wants to focus on bi-national collaborations, creating a template for other Canadian centres.

During Stampede, Ambassador Moed had the opportunity to speak with Canadian Premiers including Danielle Smith (Alberta), Scott Moe (Saskatchewan), Doug Ford (Ontario), and Tony Wakeham (Newfoundland and Labrador).

“Even if we differ politically, there are so many things we have to do and can do together,” Ambassador Moed said. “We are looking forward to the next step. We already have some plans... Hopefully, we will see those fruits in the near future.”

“Alberta isn’t just oil and gas,” Senator Fridhandler told his guests, referencing a planned visit to Olds College. “Alberta really rocks when it comes to ag and ag tech. If you haven’t been outside the city to see what’s going on, check it out, because there’s a lot happening in Alberta.”

Ambassador Moed is exploring the possibility of business, academic and student exchanges between Alberta and Israel. “There is a lot of interest in doing business with Israel, understanding what the Israeli ecosystem is about, and how it can contribute to Alberta and Calgary in particular,” he told *AJNews*, adding that Calgary Mayor Jeromy Farkas is open to the collaboration.

“He understands that it’s not just business. We want to create something that contributes to community and to the economy,” Ambassador Moed said.

“Calgary is not that big of a city in Canada, you know, but I sense that it is a unique one.... I read the other day that Calgary’s ecosystem grows four times faster than any other in the country. I like the vibe here. I like the...business-directed attitude. This *tachlis* resounds very well with Israelis.”

Albertans, says Ambassador Moed, see that they must solve problems and they strive to excel, in part because they feel isolated from the east, “...often feeling that they are the milking cow for the rest of the country.”

“I’m looking for an environment where young people, especially, are looking to learn and to do and to improve and have the motivation and the tenacity and the stamina to develop something,” Ambassador Moed said.

“If they fail, which is a very important part, by the

way, of development, they’ll continue to go and work.”

“I spoke to some gas executives about a year ago, who asked me about the situation with the United States. They were worried and asked me what I thought they should do. I said, just go your path, and if you fail you fail...you stand up and try something else,” said Ambassador Moed.

“That’s how we do it. Nobody has the full solution for everything,” he added. “That’s a new experience, I think, for many people in Canada, this sense that you have to solve problems and you will not always succeed.”

Moed and the Israeli entrepreneurs had much to relate about Israeli entrepreneurs’ willingness to take risks and their remarkable resiliency in the face of failure. Much of this has to do with the tough neighbourhood in which Israelis live, surrounded by hostile neighbours.

“Canada never faced existential threats in the past, so Canadians don’t see the world and the environment in the same way that we do,” he told *AJNews*. “We find, always, some adversarial enemy around us, so we always have to be prepared and find solutions quickly.”

“We know that Canada looks to be more competitive,” aptly sharing this metaphor:

“In order for that to happen we suggest... Israeli oil in the system that drives your engine faster, allows you to shift gears more quickly, produce more power. This is what we do. This is Israeli innovation and it really gets you faster to where you need to go in a better way that will have a lasting impact.”

The potential of that “Israeli oil” was evident at an Israel innovation stampede event at the Platform on July 7, where local entrepreneur Darren Bondar emceed a couple of panel discussions. The first featured insights from Israeli Uriel Golan and his Canadian colleague Daniel David, co-founders of RoomOne Ventures, described as “...a venture studio that identifies, validates, and builds technology companies from inception to early-stage commercialization.”

The second panel included Refael Franco – whose company, Code Blue, specializes in cyber crisis management and response – and Guy Levesque, Executive Director of the Hunter Hub for Entrepreneurial thinking at U of C.

In conversation with Bondar, Franco and Levesque described the supports necessary to transform the great ideas of young entrepreneurs into commercial success. “There is possibly no better week than Stampede to talk about entrepreneurship,” said Bondar, adding, “Calgary has always been built by people willing to take risks.”

Refael Franco had much to say on the topic of risk, and just whom should assume it.

“The government should take the risk,” says Franco, explaining that the Israeli government supports young entrepreneurs by providing seed money of up to half a million dollars to fund start-ups that pitch great ideas. Often the government itself becomes the first customer for promising start-ups, he said.

Franco related how important it is for the government to work with universities, homeland security agencies, and the private sector.

In Israel, representatives from these sectors gather annually in September, setting priorities based on three or four challenges that they jointly recognize and wish to solve during the coming year, said Franco. They then determine which organizations and startups they will fund to address those challenges.

Many of the challenges are not unique to Israel but, rather, universal, including energy, climate, supply chain, and food safety concerns, Franco says.

“When the solutions start coming...we’ll buy those solutions,” he said, adding that the partners fund nine universities, almost 500 researchers and student labs.



Senator Daryl Fridhandler and Israeli Ambassador Iddo Moed.

Thanks to a thriving ecosystem, solutions are found and commercialized, Franco told his Calgary audience.

Israel has much to offer when it comes to innovation, while Alberta can lend much expertise to Israel when it comes to creating scale, he said.

Another way the Israeli government helps to fast-track worthwhile projects is by reducing red tape.

Government, says Franco, should make it easy for startup entrepreneurs to bring their ideas and motivation, and they should do the rest. “This is the beginning of how you build 603 cyber start-ups in five years,” he said adding that there are currently some 2,700 start-ups in Tel Aviv alone.

“This is the reason we are sitting on this panel this morning, said Guy Levesque. “When you want to be the best, you learn and work with the best.”

“It all starts with talent,” he added. “That’s the first piece and that’s at the very top of the funnel of anything you want to do. And then you scaffold around that.”

“It’s okay for it to not work out,” said Levesque. “If you do fall flat on your face, you pick yourself up and you start again.” Resiliency, he said, “is the number one skill of the entrepreneurial community at the University of Calgary.”

Franco says it is a mistake to view failure negatively. “Failure is part of success. This is a mindset of startups. We fail today; we know what we’ve got to do tomorrow.... This is the mindset of innovation.

“In 2020 Israel suffered from a massive cyber attack on our water facilities,” Franco told his Calgary audience. During the crisis, he “understood that a cyber attack is not just about technology.”

“There was no methodology of crisis management,” said Franco, who decided to develop one. He subsequently opted to build a platform based on AI that can assist companies and governments during crises. Today, his company is providing expertise in Germany, London, and Montreal.

Entrepreneurs like Franco have much to offer when it comes to bi-national collaboration, says Ambassador Moed, who adds that an important next step would be to arrange an Alberta trade mission to Israel, where he would welcome an Alberta trade office.

“Who knows where this goes? There is such potential. The Emirates are going to have frequent flights [between] Calgary and the gulf, which is interesting because Israel and the Emirates are close. We have numerous strategic collaborations, and it is interesting to tap into that.”

“I see an interesting potential here and...I want to be able to use Calgary as an example for others. If we do things right, we can do so much.”

Although he was busy on other fronts during Stampede, Ambassador Moed wants the local Jewish community to know that he plans to visit again after the High Holidays.

“I am looking forward for an opportunity to meet and be with them and talk about what is on their minds,” the Ambassador said. “I was born in Holland. I grew up partly in the diaspora and I know how important that is, so that is what I’d like to do here also...to connect with the community.”

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from the

Sources

by Eliezer Segal

In Heaven with Morgan Davis

One of my favourite Leonard Cohen songs is the one called "Bird on the Wire." The Montreal poet explained that the inspiration for that work came from the sight of birds perched on telephone wires that had only recently been installed on the undeveloped Greek island of Hydra where he lived during the 1960s. However, he liked to speak of it as a country song, and indeed its initial recording by Judy Collins in 1968 was orchestrated in the country-western style. Cohen's own rendition was produced in Nashville.

The song consists largely of a listing of similes that illustrate the vulnerabilities and delusions of the author's quest for personal freedom: "like a bird on the wire," "a worm on a hook," "a knight from some old-fashioned book" – and the simile that I want to focus on here: "like a drunk in a midnight choir."

Aside from its convenient rhyme with "wire," it is by no means obvious what that image is supposed to convey to the listener. Cohen said that it was based on his experiences on Hydra with inebriated men as they (himself included) stumbled up the stairs arm in arm and burst into beautifully spontaneous song.

Do you know which intoxicating beverage those drunks were imbibing as they sang?

Well, I just might have an answer for you.

The image of the drunk in a midnight choir would recur a decade later in a song by Texas country-western performers Larry Gatlin and the Gatlin Brothers. I do not know whether or not the Gatlins were aware of the Leonard Cohen song or consciously alluding to it. Their ballad tells of a church mission and soup kitchen in Nashville that offers meals to urban derelicts, providing them with sympathy, religious preaching and a session of hymn-singing (reminiscent of that Salvation Army mission in *Guys and Dolls*). After midnight the missionaries dismiss the homeless guests to stagger back into the streets and resume their pathetic routines. In the song, one of their company has gotten hold of some cheap but cherished wine – "they spot an old buddy with a bottle of heaven" – which they all share, leading them to contemplate a profound theological question: "And now

the midnight choir starts to sing \ Will they have Mogen David in Heaven? \ Dear Lord, we'd all like to know \ Will they have Mogen David in Heaven, sweet Jesus? \ If they don't, who the hell wants to go?"

For any of my readers who might not be aware, "Mogen David" refers to a popular kosher wine that has been on the market since the 1930s – probably the only commercially produced kosher wine in America at that time – and has become the proverbial exemplification of the syrupy beverages that are often disdained by more sophisticated palates. (During the 1970s the brand was owned by the Coca Cola corporation; it is now marketed by the Wine Group Corporation based in California.)

In Gatlin's lyrics Mogen David's main distinction is its low price, making it affordable to a group of skid row drunks. As it happens, the price of the wine was kept low by its being made from Concord grapes that are grown in the northeastern United States. Because the taste of those grapes is generally quite bitter, it had to be offset by the addition of large quantities of sugar. This situation has contributed to the widespread misconception that all kosher wines are excessively sugary.

Of course for Jewish audiences, much of the irony of the Gatlins' kosher reference lies in its association with the Christian missionary setting, complete with the invocation of "sweet Jesus" – though I am not certain that the Gatlins themselves were fully aware of that delightful incongruity.

A similar instance of the Mogen David imagery is found in the work of another Texas artist, the great blues guitarist Sam "Lightnin' Hopkins." Hopkins recorded this memorable tune, (which gives the impression that he was improvising it on the spot) under the title *Black Cat Blues*. It describes a conversation between two lowlifes as they plan a spree that includes a drinking binge. The point of the story seems to be that the blacks and whites can get along just fine until the white cat realizes that he has a problem with black cats being black.

In the song, the cats' quest for cheap alcohol was

described as one telling his buddy "Go on over there, where you can drink something \ That old Morgan Davis wine. \ ...Just go ahead and drink that Morgan Davis wine." (Evidently, neither Hopkins nor his characters were Hebrew scholars.) In any case, the "Morgan Davis" is mentioned alongside a wine named "Thunderbird" – the reference is to a sweetened, fortified lemon-flavored port variety that was produced by California's Gallo wineries and was targeted to the Black American market. Thunderbird is mentioned as an example of a cheap "bum wine" in numerous films, rap songs and other American popular media.

Although the Mogen David label has generally directed its marketing towards somewhat higher-quality products, it still maintains its prominence in the bum wine market with its MD 20/20 line, which may be purchased in a number of fruity flavors. It is popularly known as "Mad Dog," though the initials MD really denote Mogen David.

In 1977 Bobby Goldsboro (best remembered for his syrupy 1968 hit "Honey") recorded the *Cowboy and the Lady*, which was also covered by famous artists like Brenda Lee, John Denver and others. The tune tells about an unlikely romantic encounter in a rained-out airport lounge in Tennessee between a grandly sophisticated lady and the rough protagonist "in my rhinestone-studded suit, my cowboy hat, and boots." The lyrics enumerate the glaring disparities between the two improbable lovers, which are epitomized by the ultimate contrast: "I was Mogen David wine, she was Chablis fifty-nine."

It is somewhat gratifying to appreciate that high-quality (and even inexpensive) Chablis Chardonnay wines are now readily available to refined kosher palates.

'From the Sources' by Eliezer Segal is sponsored by the Zeisler Families of Calgary, Edmonton, New York and Los Angeles

The son of a Mohel brings family's story to Edmonton Fringe Festival

By Shayna Cairns, LJI Reporter

Internationally touring storyteller Noam Osband is bringing his award-winning show, "Circumscribed: A True Tall Tale of One Father, Two Sons, and Thousands of Foreskins," to the Edmonton Fringe Festival from August 14 – 23, 2026.

It's a comedy storytelling show about growing up with a father who was a mohel (Jewish ritual circumciser) who buried foreskins at home, Noam's failed efforts at finding paternal figures after his father's untimely death, and later wrestling with circumcising his own kid. Weaving together family video, pictures, and audio recordings, this comedic storytelling is a perfect show about the loveable eccentrics we call family.

Osband will bring the show to Edmonton for its Canada debut, with nine performances as part of the Edmonton Fringe Festival. The 60-minute show will be performed at Stage 21: the Sanctuary Stage in the Holy Trinity Anglican Church (10037 84 Avenue) in Edmonton's south side for one show a day on August 14 and 15, and August 17 through 23.

"It's a story about my relationship with my father and ... about the relationship of parents and kids. So, my father was a mohel, and he circumcised me. He did my brothers, friends and family. We used to bury foerskins by the tree near the garage," he told the Philadelphia Jewish Exponent last year.

Osband didn't have much interaction with non-Jews until he went to college, at which point he realized that some of the things he had experienced were truly unique.

"Nobody else had a foreskin tree near their garage, but I never thought about how odd it was until I got to

college," he said. "And I would sometimes tell people the story, and they'd be like, are you crazy?"

"It's a show about growing up with a father who was a very loving and very good father, but eccentric in really good ways and really loved getting us involved in ritual and a lot of esoteric Jewish ritual. And then he died young. He died when he was 51. And then in the years afterwards, me looking for father figures who were not really great father figures.

"And then the show sort of ends in me becoming a dad myself and wrestling with whether or not I was going to circumcise my own son."

He describes it as "a storytelling show" in which everything said on stage is "100% true," including lots of family photos, audio and video, even footage of the performer's own bris.

"It is not rare in comedy and storytelling that you embellish stuff, but I think almost to a fault, I cannot embellish," he said. "It's hard for me. So, truly, all the stories are real."

In addition to his work as a mohel, Osband's father, Michael Osband, was a pediatrician, pediatric hematologist and oncologist at a time when childhood leukemia survival rates were much lower than they are today. Michael died when Noam was 20 years old.

"I think it's in part because his work was so real and so heavy that he enjoyed bringing the sense of magic and wonder into the world with us," Osband said.

"He could make jokes with very serious people that nobody else could make, I think in part because he was known as this very, you know, also sort of serious, respectful person. But he just had this other side to him, too, that really rubbed off on me, who's a performer and likes doing comedy stuff," Osband said.

"I would sometimes have these stories that I would



Noam Osband will be performing at the Edmonton Fringe Festival from Aug. 14 - 23.

tell about my father that were sort of very funny. And then I thought, 'There's a show to do.' I thought, 'Oh, well, there's this through line about parenthood and about what we offer our kids. Then also there's a through line about circumcision, which was such a big deal for him,'" he said.

"Circumscribed" won the Audience Choice Award at the 2025 New York City Fringe Festival.

"I think it's a fun show because most people who've seen the show are not Jewish. And I'm explaining halacha and random Jewish things, and it works. I think there's this level, which is if you have a Jewish background, there's a certain fun element to hearing funny stories," he said.

The quotes in this article are taken from an interview that Noam did with Stephen Silver for the Philadelphia Jewish Exponent.

Spiritual *Cont. from page 4*

feel comfortable and supported.” Recently, the *Alberta Jewish News* was invited inside two of Edmonton’s fully active mikva’ot for a behind the scenes immersive tour with Bernstein.

Edmontonians may be surprised to learn that there are two women’s mikva’ot in the City: one on the drive to Downtown and another at Beth Israel Synagogue. Visiting the mikvah is a deeply personal ritual for a married Jewish woman, stated Rebbetzin Chaya Sarah Blachman, one of the community’s other Mikvah Ladies, and the caretaker of the Downtown facility. “Women sometimes think the mikvah is only for completely observant women, or they might think they need to come looking a certain way. In fact, this is a sacred and precious mitzvah for all halachically Jewish women who are married to a Jewish man.” She elaborated further: “I love the fact that we have such an eclectic group of women who traffic our mikvah and come comfortably attired as they choose. The ritual is absolutely central to our tradition, and we want to make this mitzvah as accessible as possible to Jewish women in the community regardless of their general level of observance, affiliation or lack thereof.” Both physical intimacy and the ability to bring new life into the world are sacred gifts from G-d; immersion in the mikvah powerfully frames these aspects of life for the Jewish couple.

The mikvah, and what goes on within is a mystery to many, but Bernstein candidly explained the entire process in detail. “Our mikvah is exclusively for Jewish women who are married, and this is connected to the laws of marital purity. We Mikvah Ladies are very discreet, and when a woman contacts us, we make sure to schedule her at a time when she won’t run into anybody else, and she’ll have complete privacy.” She emphasized that this takes a great deal of careful coordination between the Mikvah Ladies, but that dignity and the personal comfort of the women who visit are top priorities. “One big misunderstanding people have about the mikvah is that you immerse in the waters to cleanse the physical body. Now this is partially true; the body is cleansed but nobody is to enter the mikvah unclean. In fact, immersion in the Mikvah is solely for spiritual transformation, indeed, elevation. Before a woman goes into the Mikvah she bathes and removes anything that might impede total envelopment of her body in the waters of the Mikvah. Bernstein pointed out that Beth Israel’s mikvah recently had one of its private preparation rooms renovated and retiled. The atmosphere boasts the ambiance of a spa with delicate feminine décor, big fluffy towels, and luxurious snuggly robes.

“Some women do their pre immersion preparations at home, but this is where many women choose to get ready and have their own dedicated time to focus inwardly, reflect, and prepare,” she indicated a modern washroom with a big bathtub, and elegantly lit vanity. Next to the sink, a personal checklist is provided to help women ensure they are ready to immerse. “There can be no barrier between the body and the water,” explained Bernstein. Things like contact lenses, glasses, and even makeup must be removed.

“I’m there to be a comforting presence and support the woman,” she continued. “Sometimes I’ll be asked to check something, but we uphold everyone’s dignity so that they want to participate in this incredible mitzvah and come back.”

These are many technical details, but both Rebbetzin Blachman and Bernstein stressed the immense spiritual rejuvenation that women feel when

a monthly visit to the mikvah becomes part of their routine. “Sometimes I have ladies who begin coming later in life and tell me that they wish they’d known about the mikvah earlier,” said Bernstein as she delicately checked the temperature of the waters. “Even if you’re not ready to commit to going to the mikvah every month, don’t underestimate the power of going even once. Judaism is not an all or nothing religion. Each and every small or big Mitzvah we do is so valuable and encouraged, regardless of what we haven’t yet committed to. A married woman who has not used the Mikvah during her reproductive years, still has the opportunity to immerse now – in her post menopausal stage – and bring sanctity and blessing to her marriage. It’s never too late to embrace this special opportunity,” explained Rebbetzin Blachman. This single act is a powerful way to elevate her femininity in a meaningfully Jewish way.

Mikvah waters, collected from rainfall, are for spiritual cleansing, and provide women with a feeling of rebirth for another month. “With how busy we all get with family, and work, taking this time that is completely for yourself and nobody else is something special,” offered Bernstein. “A thriving Mikvah is the foundation of a healthy Jewish community,” explained Rebbetzin Blachman. “When a new community is established, the first thing that needs to be built is a mikvah, even before a shul. A mikvah guarantees that couples can maintain marital purity, and Jewish communities are all about families. Even at Masada, you can still see what is preserved of the mikva’ot there, and they were constructed according to Halachic specifications down to the exact centimeter.”

“Our mikvah is registered on Mikvah.org which is a resource for women who may be away from home, and in need of immersion,” noted Bernstein. “There’s also

lots of information gathered there.” When asked about how to contact a Mikvah Lady, she explained: “Some women have their regular Mikvah Lady that they like to call on exclusively because that trust and comfort is built over the years, but we have myself, Rebbetzin Tal, Rebbetzin Blachman, and Malka Lutsky who are all trained and experienced Mikvah Ladies.” It really is never too late to make this monthly mitzvah a part of your life. Regardless of affiliation all women are invited to come and take the plunge! There is nothing to lose, and so much to be gained. BI.Mikvah@gmail.com is monitored regularly by the Edmonton Mikvah Ladies. Those interested in visiting the mikvah can also contact Sylvia Benjamin at the Beth Israel office: 780.488.2840.

The mikvah takes a lot of resources to service and maintain in addition to the efforts of the dedicated Mikvah Ladies. There are costs associated with upkeep, cleaning, plumbing, laundry, and equipment, but a mikvah is a critical part of sustaining a functioning Jewish community so such expenses are essential. Coming up on October 18, Beth Israel will host a Women’s Wellness Brunch as a fundraiser to help support its mikvah. Local ladies are asked to save the date and stay tuned for further exciting details. The brunch begins at 11:30 and will give attendees a chance to nourish body and soul while learning about women’s health and the mikvah. Those interested can register with the Beth Israel office before October 11.

The mikvah at Beth Israel is also equipped for immersion of vessels that are used for food preparation and service. This service is open to the entire community, and appointments can be made through the Beth Israel office: 780.488.2840.

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