

?You have to take bold action to sustain and hold dear what is right?



The lighting of the Menorah each Hanukkah symbolizes the message of triumph over adversity.

It's a message that has endured for millennia, but in times like these when adversity might feel overwhelming, it's one that is just as relevant is ever before.

This was the message delivered at Town Hall before more than 200 local residents as the community came together for Aurora's annual Menorah Lighting Ceremony.

Hosted by Chabad Aurora and the Town on Monday evening, the event featured fire juggling, traditional foods like latkes and jelly donuts, and sparkling glow sticks illuminating the faces of children ? but the message, one that is age-old but still contemporary, was as illuminating as the Menorah itself.

?Hanukkah's a celebration of perseverance, faith and strength in the face of difficult, almost overwhelming odds,? said Mayor Tom Mrakas, who attended the ceremony alongside Council members and MPs Tony Van Bynen (Newmarket-Aurora) and Leah Taylor Roy (Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill). ?The lessons we learn from tonight's ceremony are important as it reminds us how the acts of goodness and kindness need to be spread by all of us, to all of human kind. The messages within the celebrations of Hanukkah are not exclusive to the Jewish community but all people. I strongly believe Aurora is one of the most inclusive communities in Canada, and I want to ensure that our community is seen as a place for those seeking the light that Hanukkah reminds us of.

?The lighting of the Menorah represents going through the darkness to the light. The truth is that 2022 did have some incredible challenges, what some would call dark moments. Here at home, we all dealt with the lingering impacts of the pandemic and the rapid increase in the cost of living, but we also saw tragic events across the globe, including the war in Ukraine. Ceremonies like tonight are vital to reminding all of us that there is indeed light, hope, perseverance, and peace, which gets brighter with each act of kindness towards one another.?

Added Van Bynen: ?The one thing I always keep as a guiding light is that light will always conquer darkness and that's what we're celebrating today.?

Hanukkah, explained Rabbi Yossi Hecht of Chabad Aurora, is celebrated over eight days and originates in the time of Jerusalem's Second Temple over 2,000 years ago.

"A small group of Jews stood up against hate and tyranny," said Rabbi Hecht. "A small group of Jews won a war against the Syrian Greeks [and] with determination and perseverance, they fought against a mighty army and won." We also celebrate the perseverance of the few over the many: the Maccabee family stood up and they stood strong. They understood there are times when you have to take bold action to sustain and hold dear what is right."

The Menorah, he said, symbolizes triumph over adversity and light over darkness, and each successive night of Hannukah, the additional light from the Menorah "illuminates the world with warmth, love and kindness."

"Tonight, the universal message of the menorah for each and every one of us is to hold the [light] up to our freedoms: the freedom to choose what is right, the freedom to practice religion." The world is full of challenges; some of us may have personal challenges we need to overcome. It might seem overwhelming [that] there is so much to overcome "how can my little self carry forward and be that beacon of light for my family, for my neighbours, and for my community?" Tonight, as we gather together celebrating the great miracle of the few over the many, the miracle of the oil, we awaken our inner freedom and learn of the great strength that lies in each and every one of us: spreading warmth, helping one another, illuminating the lives of our friends, community, and our families.

"There is no challenge we cannot win, no obstacle we cannot overcome "you, we, together, have the power, the few over the many". Light by its very nature not only benefits one's self when it shines, but also all who are in this vicinity. A little light can expel a while lot of darkness. Tonight as we kindle the Menorah, we pledge to continue illuminating the world, illuminating our community, illuminating the Town of Aurora with goodness and kindness so together we can prepare the world for a time where we will know no evil, know of no hate, know of no plagues, and live together in a more peaceful world when the most glorious and powerful of lights will shine forever."

By Brock Weir
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