Inspired by Standing Rock

The story of Chanukah is a narrative of the victory of a small group of righteous fighters against a powerful empire. It is a redemptive story of standing for one’s beliefs (and existence) and triumphing in the end. The end of 2016 is a time when redemptive stories are even more welcome and the decision by the U.S. government last week to accede to the demands of protesters in North Dakota is just such a story. Plans to run an oil pipeline through a cemetery and under a water reservoir near the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation were shelved. This doesn’t mean an alternative route won’t see the project completed, but it does alleviate the immediate fears the people had of the potential destruction of their water supply and further desecration of sacred sites, some of which have already been bulldozed.

The example of the Standing Rock Sioux and their allies from all over the country who stood up to the oil company is already being held up as a model for British Columbians, many of whom spent the weekend fuming over an announcement by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. The prime minister declared that cabinet had approved the Kinder Morgan Trans-Mountain pipeline — which would see the number of tankers transporting bitumen from Burnaby, through Burrard Inlet, to Asia, increase to 34 per month from five — as well as another pipeline to the United States, while rejecting the Northern Gateway pipeline, which would have sent diluted bitumen to Asia via northwestern British Columbia. The incongruity of the decision — that the government recognizes the pristine fragility of the northern coast, but not cohesively Republican, there may be a renewed commitment to keep Judaism alive in our current period of history.

We need not be modern Maccabees to take on acting as if we are OK when, quite honestly, the hope that we are doing everything possible, to our community – our Maccabees to liberate the Temple, we must be grateful for the community we live in and those who run it. Our community organizations are our modern-day Maccabees, working tirelessly to keep Judaism alive in our current period of history.

I am confident that the state of our current Jewish community is strong and united. The harmony among all Richmond Jewish organizations and the commitment to one another and our families or our in-laws a family might not be as strong as it was when you were growing up. We need to be modern Maccabees to take such a stand. It is highly unlikely that any of us will see our lives threatened for opposing a pipeline, or acting within the law to advance or oppose some other viewpoint. Conversely, if action is not taken, if voices do not coalesce to demand alternatives to our world’s rapacious appetite for fossil fuels, all of creation may well be threatened.

Lynn Superstein-Raber
The Bayt

Happy Chanukah

These few tips might help change how you relate to family.

LYNN SUPERSTEIN-RABER

If it’s that time of year again! For many, the holiday season is spent with family and filled with nothing but joy, love, laughter, gratitude and giving. If this is you, you can go ahead and stop reading now…. This piece is for those of us who don’t live in the Hallmark Channel. Let’s be honest with ourselves. We love our family. At the same time, getting together with our families or our in-laws around the holidays can get stressful, awful or even painful. Some people end up in my therapy office after the holidays, shattered from family celebrations.

If you’re tired of the stressful dynamics in your family, maybe this year it’s time to try something a little different. Let’s call this an emotional fast.

Set boundaries. Setting boundaries is the foundation for standing up to the family dynamics that we deal with every year. Maybe the lessons we learned in childhood were to not “stir the pot” and to avoid conflict. The end result of this is us ending up acting as if we are OK when, quite frankly, we aren’t.

Another way to set boundaries is to put space between yourself and whatever or whoever you’re trying to set boundaries with. You may not be able to control what others say, but you can certainly move yourself to another room or go for a walk.

Don’t regress. Perhaps you always get dragged into being the mediator or the scapegoat in your family when you were growing up. When we, as adults, spend time with our families in the present, we tend to slip back into old roles. Don’t be who you were when you were 14. Be who you are now, even if your family doesn’t see it. If they continue to define you as your past, don’t stoop to their level by doing the same to them. Be the grown-up in the room.

There’s no way to know for sure how your holiday will turn out as you try some of these ideas. At best, you might become a catalyst for actual change in your family and holidays might get better.

But, whether family time improves or continues on as it always has, you can at least know that you are taking charge of your life and taking steps toward a happier you.

Enjoy the latest.

Lynn Superstein-Raber is a registered psychologist who helps people overcome depression, anxiety and relationship problems. For more information, visit lynnsuperstein.com.