

A Thought for Shabbat

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Shabbat Shalom

Friday, December 23, 2011
27 Kislev 5772



Parashat Miketz/Chanukah

In this week's Torah portion, *Miketz*, we are reminded that taking action is often difficult. There was a famine that spread across the region and Jacob recognized that the only way to survive was to go to Egypt to receive food.

"He said to his sons: 'Why are you [just standing there,] looking [like that]? I hear that there are provisions to be had in Egypt. Go down and provide for us from there, that we may live and not die.'" (Genesis 42:1-2)

Despite the obvious remedy to their problem, the commentaries are clear that the brothers hesitated to make a move because, after a complicated history together, they were afraid to confront their brother Joseph in Egypt. Ultimately, though, they went. Not only did they receive the necessary provisions there, but they were reunited with Joseph, as well.

Also this week, we tell the story of the Maccabean revolt when, against the odds, a relatively few devoted, passionate activists, led by Judah Maccabee, overpowered the mighty Syrian forces in order to reclaim the Temple in Jerusalem. In many regards, Chanukah is a holiday about the power of our actions.

Taking action is never easy, but when *not* acting threatens our physical or spiritual survival, we are left without much choice. The festival of Chanukah, taken together with this week's Torah portion, reminds us that within each of us lies the power to overcome rational odds and personal fears in order to act to make a difference.