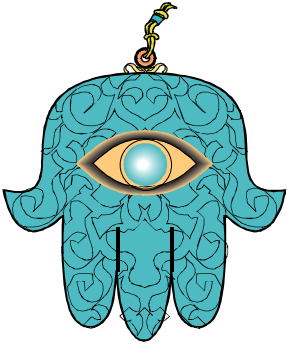
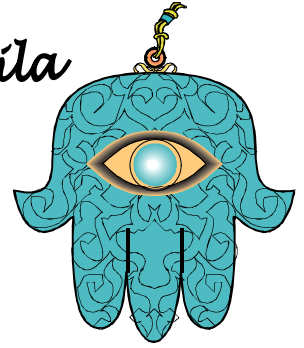


# Spiritual Thought for the Week

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## “Life’s Inner Struggles”

*Parashat Vayishlach (Genesis 32:4-36:43)*

Life is filled with challenges, both from without and from within. At night, after a long day of facing life’s external challenges, we often find ourselves facing our own internal challenges and struggles. This can often be a lonely, sometimes even frightening experience.

On the eve of one of the greatest challenges in his life, Jacob finds himself caught in a struggle, a wrestling match. Jacob is about to meet his brother Esau, who he has not seen in twenty years. Their last encounter involved Jacob deceitfully taking his brother’s blessing, kindling Esau’s wrath against Jacob with threats by Esau to kill his brother. Now Jacob is about to meet Esau, and he spends the night before contemplating this reunion. He sends his family ahead, and he stays behind, all alone: **“And Jacob remained alone, and a man wrestled with him until the break of dawn” (Genesis 32:25).**

Who was this “man” that wrestled with Jacob? Was there actually a “man,” or was this encounter in the night actually a metaphor for Jacob’s own internal struggles? Was Jacob involved in a physical wrestling match, or was he wrestling with his own conscience?

Jacob was wrestling with his own anxieties, his own fears, and his own dilemmas. The “wrestling match” that night was a manifestation of a spiritual struggle within Jacob’s soul, projected through Jacob’s own sub conscience.

The lesson we may draw from Jacob’s struggle that night is not the outcome, but the struggle itself. We are reminded, in very powerful, almost physical terms, that even people of faith, so-called “men of God,” experience inner struggles in their lives. Faith does not always provide the answers to our struggles, but instead offers a medium through which we can express our insecurities. While struggling, “Jacob remained alone,” but his experience reminds us that, as people of faith, we are never really “alone.” Even in the dark of the night, and in the deepest recesses of our souls, God is still with us.