This week's Torah portion is Vayishlach where we have the reunion of two brothers; Jacob and Esau. When they parted Jacob had just stolen the birthright of his brother and he fled. We see this as a pattern in Jacob’s life, that it seems he is always running away when things are difficult. While on the way to meet his brother Jacob wrestles with an angel.

The *Zohar* explains that this wrestling match between Jacob and the angel represents all of the humans’ struggle to wrestle with their dark side. When I think about what Jacob was wrestling with, I am reminded it was his past and his inability to confront difficult situations.

This reminds me of a story from when I was a little girl, maybe 8 years old. I borrowed some clothes from my sister without asking. I had not anticipated seeing her that day, so what was the harm? But my mother told me we were on our way to pick her up, and I knew at that moment I would be in trouble-she would see the clothes I had taken without asking! I looked around my mother’s car for a jacket or a coat of some kind to hide my thievery! All my mother had was her gigantic fur coat. It’s important to know that this happened in the middle of summer. But I was too afraid of my sister’s wrath to risk her seeing it. So, I put the fur coat on and when my mother asked, I told her it was because I was “cold.” The three of us spent the day shopping at Costco. Me, looking ridiculous in a winter fur coat in the middle of summer, was sweating and miserable. But it couldn’t have been as bad as just telling my sister, right? My sister, being smart, caught on and said why won’t you take it off. Even my mother said, “Shira, take off the coat.” Finally, my discomfort had become unbearable and I took off the coat. When my sister saw I was wearing her clothes, she was livid. But she was more upset that I hadn’t said anything, that I avoided the situation completely and instead chose to be miserable.

Sometimes we think that avoiding situations is helping us or making the situation disappear altogether. Although sometimes it’s difficult, dealing with our struggles, wrestling with our angels, makes us stronger. Without confronting them, we are left wounded and broken in some way, or we’re standing in Costco in a fur jacket in the middle of summer.