

**D'Var Torah May 29, 2015**  
**Written by Alex Dube on the Occasion of his Confirmation**

In this Torah portion, Moses tells the Israelites to purify themselves while he climbs up Mt. Sinai, again! While cleaning themselves up they hear this deafening clap of thunder, which sort of wakes them up out of their stupor and also scares them a little! At this point, they all gather at the foot of the mountain in order to try and get a little closer to God.

This particular piece of Torah talks a lot about preparing for something big. In this case, they are preparing for their encounter with God. They don't realize that they are about to be closer to God than any other people has ever been AND they don't realize that they are actually preparing to receive the Ten Commandments. This is going to be a pretty big day for them!

I know we can all relate to this on many different levels. Every morning we wake up, shower, get ready, and make our way out into the world. Sometimes we know what awaits us, but often times we are just wingin' it, and have no idea what's in store. I spent a year preparing for one of the biggest things in my life, which happened right here, in this sanctuary, one year ago! It was my bar mitzvah.

I spent so much time learning my Torah and Haftarah portions, practicing my sermon, and rehearsing the service! It took a ton of preparation! And then, naturally I prepared physically as well – I showered, got dressed in nice, clean clothes – all in preparation for this big event! Even though these two events are not exactly the same, both the Israelites and I spent a good deal of our time preparing for a holy experience that was extremely important to us, which revolved around becoming closer to God.

Moses makes it very clear that while he is on top of the mountain, the Israelites should spend time preparing for the upcoming event. He tells them to make sure everyone is cleansed of anything God might find displeasing, and he insists that everyone wash their clothes as well as themselves. He wants to make sure they are all in their Shabbat best, as if what they wear will have an impact on the memory of their experience. In a way, all of this which Moses instructs the people to do hints at the seriousness and importance their experience holds.

The secret revelation or sod in this portion is that sometimes beauty and perfection can come from fear and anxiety. When God is banging around at the top of the mountain, making a ruckus with thunder and lightning, the people become frightened, as they should! BUT, then Moses makes his way down the mountain with the most perfect expression of God's love cradled in his arms - the Ten Commandments.

Something so beautiful and important coming from all that loud and very frightening thunder and lightning feels unnatural. It is almost as if this portion is a metaphor for how some of the most beautiful and important things in life come from something seemingly ugly and insignificant.

My hope for us tonight, is that we learn to recognize the beauty that is hiding behind the unpleasantness we encounter throughout our lives, and that we hold onto that beauty with all of our might!