

D'var Torah: Sharing Your Wisdom

A Mount Zion Guide for Bar/Bat Mitzvah Students

Writing your D'var Torah can be one of the most exciting parts of your Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparation. Besides the fact that this is a chance to work in English, it is an opportunity for you to express your feelings about your ceremony, the Torah, and to apply the lessons of the Torah to modern life. When you give your sermon, you become a teacher for the congregation. You allow your guests and other service participants to learn about what you have studied and to learn more about who you are.




The D'var Torah can be on any topic you choose, as long as it arises from the Torah Portion. *It can come from any part of the Torah Portion, not only from the verses you are chanting.*

The Rabbi will contact you about 2 months before your Bar/Bat Mitzvah to work with you on writing your D'var Torah. You will meet a few times and talk by phone and e-mail through the process. As you write it, have a parent or other adult help you with language usage, grammar, and proofreading.

Preparing Your D'var Torah

Writing your D'var Torah is a process, sort of like baking a cake. If you follow the recipe, it will come out right. But it is also creative, like decorating the case, where you can express your individuality.

Follow this basic “recipe” and it will be easy.

-  First, review the summary you wrote in Sefer Seminar. Make final revisions so it is ready to read aloud at your Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Have an adult proofread it.
-  Next, read your entire Torah portion in English three times, with a parent. Sometimes it helps to read it aloud. Make sure you understand what you are reading.
-  Next, read all the commentaries you have been given. (In your portion booklet and the sheets in your b'nei mitzvah packet.)

✎ Choose one aspect of your portion to focus on AND the verses or verses that are related. It might be a part of the story, a theme, a law, a verse, etc. It can be something that appeals to you, or something you find difficult to understand or accept.

✎ Research what others before you have had to say about your topic. Each word of Torah is precious and every lesson has been discussed and written about before. Using commentaries, books in the Temple library, and the Internet, find at least three opinions about your topic. It is best if they come from Jewish sources of different periods of time.

✎ Think about your portion and your research. Answer these questions:

- ? What does this teach?
- ? Why is it part of our tradition?
- ? Why has it been important for so many generations?
- ? What are its hidden meanings?
- ? Was anything surprising?
- ? What does it teach today?
- ? How does it apply to your life as a

- ◆ Jew
- ◆ Young adult
- ◆ Student
- ◆ Friend
- ◆ Son/daughter
- ◆ Sibling
- ◆ Citizen
- ◆ Etc.



- ? How does it connect to you becoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah?





Writing Your D'var Torah

You may want to outline your D'var Torah as follows in **seven steps....**

PART 1: WHAT THEY SAY....

- 1. Introduction:** Think of some interesting way to introduce your topic and how it relates to your Torah portion. You might start with a story, or something that once happened to you, or something you have learned from your research. It can be as simple as, "Of all the many aspects of this week's Torah portion, the one that most interested me was:...."
- 2. Quote the Torah:** Word for word, quote a verse or two that will be your focus. Example: "As it says in Exodus, chapter 35, verse 3: "QUOTE."
- 3. Ask a question:** What troubles you about this verse? What do you want to know? What is confusing? Ask the question.
- 4. Answer the questions with other people's answers,** in a new paragraph. Present what at least 3 other commentators have said and explain how you understand each one. Give the name of each commentator and when he or she lived.

PART 2: WHAT I SAY....

- 5. Your opinion on your topic!** Your own interpretations and opinions on your topic. Answer your original question. This is your chance to really tell us what you think. Do you agree or disagree with the commentators? Why did you choose your topic? What are your answers to some of the questions above? Give examples to back up your opinions.
- 6. Making it relevant:** How is your topic/theme/idea relevant to you and your life today or to current events and our world? What are the lessons that can be applied in your life or in our world? How does your theme connect to becoming Bar/Bat Mitzvah?
- 7. Conclusion:** Wrap it all up in a couple sentences. Repeat your point, or idea and what you have taught us.

How to Print Out and Practice your D'var Torah

When you print your final draft of your summary and D'var Torah:

- Use a large font (16-20)
- Double space
- Left justify
- Title them "Summary" and "D'var Torah"
- Number your pages
- Place the summary [not stapled] in the pocket of your binder. For your D'var Torah, three-hole punch it to put in your 3-ring binder.
- PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE reading it slowly, with pauses, and loudly.

Two Websites to go to:

1. www.reformjudaism.org/learning/torah-study – Find your book of the Torah and then your *parashah*. You can quote these commentaries.
2. www.myjewishlearning.com – Look under "Texts" then the far left option "Weekly Torah Portion" to find your *parashah*.

WHAT DO I DO NOW?

This section used when meeting with the rabbi to write your d'var Torah.

E-mail your drafts of each part to Rabbi Spilker or Rabbi Adler as indicated BEFORE your meeting date:

aspilker@mzion.org / eadler@mzion.org

	<u>Due Date</u>	<u>Completed</u>
1. Summary – final draft	_____	_____
2. Choose topic / verse	_____	_____
3. Draft of Part 1: Research of commentaries	_____	_____
4. Draft of Part 2: Your opinions	_____	_____
5. Final draft of D'var Torah	_____	_____