

D'var Torah Preparation

D'var Torah means “a word of Torah”, and is the Hebrew term for a text-based sermon. On the Saturday morning of your service, through your *D'var Torah*, you will teach the congregation Torah through *your* interpretation of the Torah reading.

There are many different approaches to writing a *D'var Torah*, and you will have 4 meetings with a rabbi to help you prepare. Unlike school projects where the student operates independently, parents are encouraged to actively participate in this learning process (as long as it is productive for both parent and child).

Some Torah portions are more accessible than others, but the rabbi working with you and your family will guide you through this process. The *D'var Torah* can be written in the format similar to a subject report, a persuasive essay or even a book report. Your *D'var Torah* will start with an aspect of your Torah portion that you find interesting and will develop from there. When complete, your *D'var Torah* should be 4-6 pages, double-spaced, with a 14-point font.

The *D'var Torah* should accomplish the following:

- Gain a grasp of the context and content of your Torah portion.
- Teach about the Torah and Judaism.
- Explore a theme(s) or aspect(s) of interest – choose one topic which can be developed and used to teach the Congregation what you have learned.
- Share your personal reflection and part of yourself.

Below is a simple outline for creating your *D'var Torah* that has worked for many of our students over the years.

D'var Torah Outline

What's in a *D'var Torah*?

1. **Summary:** Include the name of the Torah portion, the name of the book you are chanting from, the chapter and verses, and a summary of what happens in your reading. **(1-1.5 pages long)**
 - Some context may also be helpful. For example: what has happened before and/or after your Torah portion?
2. **Transition/Focus:** The aspect(s) of the portion you are going to focus on. **(1-2 paragraphs)**
 - Describe what you think your *parashah* is teaching.
 - **KEY QUESTION:** What kind of message are these ancient words saying to me? “The aspect of this portion I find most interesting/compelling/problematic/fascinating is..”
 - Include why you're choosing to focus on this particular topic.

3. **Exploration:** What does Jewish tradition have to say about your focus? (1-1.5 pages)
 - What other information can you bring to this subject that will bring it alive and make it relevant to the congregation?
4. **Your Opinion:** How do you relate to the issue(s) you raised? (1-1.5 pages)
 - An illustration from the *Bet mitzvah's* own experience is helpful here. Student may also use examples found in television, books, movies or current events.
5. **Conclusion:** A summary of what you have learned and taught the congregation, and what you will walk away with as a *Bet mitzvah*. Also include information about your Mitzvah project and 1-2 sentences of Thank yous.

Resources

We give you:

- The Torah: A Modern Commentary, by W.G. Plaut, revised edition, copyright 2005, 2006 by URJ Press, or equivalent.

You also may find these to be helpful resources:

- A Torah Commentary for Our Times by Harvey J. Fields (printout of your portion provided)
- Teaching Torah by Sorel Loeb and Barbara Kadden

Online sources, such as those listed below, can also be very helpful. Remember that everything is written through a specific lens, so please work with your child to help interpret the material.

- <http://www.myjewishlearning.com>
- <http://reformjudaism.org>
- <http://www.aish.com/tp/pl/>
- <http://www.chabad.org/parshah/otherparshas.cdo/aid/9175/jewish/All-Parshas.htm>
- sefaria.org