



## D'VAR TORAH INSTRUCTIONS

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### Introduction

One of the key elements of the Bar/Bat Mitzvah is the D'var Torah. A D'var Torah, literally a "word of torah" shows the congregation that the celebrant has reached a certain level of intellectual and spiritual maturity by thoughtfully delving into the meaning and background of the Torah portion for that day. Obviously, it is not possible to fully examine and research the entire Parashah. Usually it is better to focus on one main theme, concept or teaching.

In our congregation the expectation is that the D'var Torah will be approximately 6 to 8 minutes in duration, be delivered in a clear, audible voice and read with expression and emotion. It need not be memorized, but it must be learned almost to the point of memorization.

Usually the entire research and writing process can be completed in about a month. The D'var Torah should be about 1 ½ to 2 double spaced typed pages in length. When a final draft has been approved by Rabbi Silver the speech should be reformatted to 18 point type or larger so that it can easily be read a phrase at a time by glancing downward.

### **Process before your first meeting with Rabbi Silver**

1. Before your family appointment with Rabbi Silver; sit as a family and read the Parashah. You may want to consider purchasing a Hebrew-English version of the Torah such as the "Torah" edited by Rabbi Günter Plaut and published by the Reform movement. Other versions such as those edited by Rabbi Joseph Hertz, Dr. Richard Elliot Friedman are also excellent and useful. All can be purchased online. A bibliography is located at the end of this paper.
2. As you read the Parashah ask yourself what larger message you can derive from the Parashah and how you can relate that message to our current reality.
3. Bring your ideas to your appointment with Rabbi Silver.

### **At your family meeting with Rabbi Silver**

4. You and your parents will have the opportunity to ask questions about the service and the paperwork contained in the BM Parents Handbook
5. Rabbi Silver will give you a booklet containing the Hebrew and English text of your Parashah and a very useful commentary for young adults. It will be yours to keep. He will ask the Bar /Bat Mitzvah to read aloud selected passages (in English!) and then open a discussion on their meaning and possible suitability for a D'var Torah. By the conclusion of this meeting you will have a much clearer idea of what you want to say in your D'var Torah.
6. Using the outline provided below you should now be able, with the help of your parents and Rabbi Silver, to begin putting your D'var together, step by step.

## Outline

### 1. *Text*

Choose a passage, story, passuk (verse) or even word to focus upon. Any passage in the entire weekly Torah Portion can be used, even if you or others will not read it on the Shabbat of your Bar/Bat Mitzvah. You will quote the verse in Hebrew and English in the introduction of your D'var Torah so the congregation has a reference point for your remarks.

### 2. *Analysis*

Research the passage. You can even do a "Google" search to see what other rabbinic authorities have said about it. Also make use of the gleanings section, essays and notes in the Bar Mitzvah Parashah booklet given to you by the rabbi at your appointment with him. He will also be delighted to answer your questions and give you further pointers. In this section you must tell the congregation what two recognized rabbinic authorities have written about the passage.

### 3. *Relevance\Connection*

Tell us why this passage/verse/ concept is meaningful to you. Can you think of an analogous teaching in modern life, especially your own that illustrates the main idea? What is the main idea/teaching/ action step you want the congregation to take away from your D'var Torah?

### 4. *Jewish Commitments*

What are your Jewish commitments now that you are a Bar/Bat Mitzvah? Talk about how you will live out these Jewish adult commitments; Shabbat observance (lighting candles, saying Kiddush), attending Academy and Confirmation, attending Shabbat services and Jewish Summer camp, giving of tzedakah, and the doing of mitzvot. If you participated in a mitzvah project explain the project and how the members of the congregation can get involved. You may want to provide literature including brochures about the project at the Kiddush lunch

## *Gratitude*

5. Thank you to Rabbi and Cantor, religious school (and Tuvia) teachers, Relatives and friends, grandparents, siblings and finally parents.

## **Resources**

### **Biblical Translations and Commentaries**

*The Torah: A Modern Commentary*. Revised Edition, W Günter Plaut. Editor, URJ New York, 2005

*The Chumash –Stone Edition*. N Scherman. Editor, Art Scroll New York, 1996

*The Pentateuch and Haftorahs*. J H Hertz. Editor, Second edition Soncino Press, London

*Commentary on the Torah*. R E Friedman. Editor, Harper, San Francisco 2001

*Etz Hayim Torah and Commentary*. D Lieber. Editor, Rabbinical Assembly, New York, 2001

### **Websites with commentaries on the weekly Parashah**

[urj.org/torah/](http://urj.org/torah/)

[Myjewishlearning.com](http://Myjewishlearning.com)

[hillel.org/jewish/archives/](http://hillel.org/jewish/archives/)

[bible.ort.org/books/](http://bible.ort.org/books/)

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