

Writing a Dvar Torah: Worksheet for Bar/Bat Mitzvah Preparation

You're about to write a *dvar Torah*—literally, words of Torah. This is your opportunity to share with the community your ideas, not just about your Torah or Haftarah portions, but also about what you think or believe in general. This is a unique opportunity that I hope you will find meaningful. Writing and giving a *dvar Torah* can be a scary task, so I have prepared this worksheet to help guide you as you write it. (My intention is not to give you extra homework!) I strongly suggest that you read through this sheet and get started on it early. You may only be able to do part of it on your own, but fill in what you can, and I, your tutor, or your parent(s) can help with the rest.

B'hatzlacha! (Good Luck!) Rabbi Laurie

Torah portion

The name of my Torah portion is _____.

My Torah portion is found in the Book of _____ in the Torah.
(Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy)

The Hebrew name for this section of the Torah is _____.

My Torah portion goes from _____ (chapter: verse) to _____
(chapter: verse).

Haftarah portion

My Haftarah portion is found in the Book of _____ in the Tanach, or Hebrew Bible. (TaNaCH stands for Torah, Nevi'im, Ketuvim).

My Haftarah portion goes from _____ (chapter: verse) to _____
(chapter: verse).

Explaining my Torah and Haftarah portions

My Torah portion contains many different ideas, but the three main points are:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Using these three main points, the summary of my Torah portion is:

My Haftarah portion talks about:

Bringing in other people's ideas:

I will use the following rabbinic or medieval texts to help me explain my Torah portion:

I will also focus on the contemporary writer _____ to help me support my ideas. This person writes:

Making connections and making a point:

My Bar/Bat Mitzvah falls closest to the following Jewish holiday or any other Jewish time of the year _____. I could make the following connection between my Torah and Haftarah portion and this holiday or time:

_____.

The secular holiday or current event that is happening near it is:

_____. I could make the following connection between my Torah and Haftarah portion and this holiday or current event: _____.

The biblical story or idea of _____ reminded me of the modern issue or idea of _____. (Use more room if you need to explain.)

After the community listens to my *dvar Torah*, I want them to remember just one idea, which is my message. This is:

Setting a Schedule

The date of my Bar/Bat Mitzvah is _____. I will have the first draft of my *dvar Torah* written by: _____. I will have my second draft written by _____. I will have all my final revisions done by _____.

Sample Outline of Dvar Torah

There are many ways to write a *dvar Torah*. What is important is that it has a structure to it so that the community understands what you're saying. Remember, this is probably the first time they have heard your ideas, and they do not have your *dvar Torah* written out in front of them. Therefore, you have to give a lot of explanation for every idea you share. You also have to SPEAK SLOWLY AND CLEARLY. (We'll all bug you about this more as the time gets close!)

Here is one way to structure your dvar Torah, but there are many different options. This is only to give you ideas.

1. Welcome the community, family, friends
2. Introduce and summarize Torah portion (and possibly Haftarah portion— optional)
3. Share with the community ONE main idea you want to focus on.
 - a. Explain the idea.
 - b. Why is this interesting or important to you?
 - c. What do others say? (Bring in rabbinic or medieval texts and a contemporary writer or two)
 - d. Can you connect it to a Jewish holiday or current event?
 - e. What is your message? (the main point you want to get across)
4. Talk about your Bar/Bat mitzvah
 - a. Why is becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah important to you? What does it mean to you? What was it like to prepare for it?
 - b. What is important about becoming an adult member of Shaarei Shamayim? Why is this community important to you?
 - c. Talk about your Shaarei Shamayim project.
 - d. Talk about your larger *tikkun olam* (social justice) or *mitzvah* (“good deed”) project.
 - e. If possible, connect some or all of these ideas to your Torah portion.
5. Thank you's
 - a. It's nice to thank people who have helped you...but remember, this is not the Grammy Awards. This should be a small piece of your *dvar Torah* and not the main part!
 - b. Wish everyone a Shabbat shalom.