

Mazal Tov! Within the next few months you will become b.mitzvah; we are looking forward to celebrating this special moment in your life with you.

In addition to leading the service and chanting from the Torah, you will have the opportunity to teach the congregation a lesson based on your interpretation of the Torah portion. This is called a D'var Torah, literally a "word of Torah." The overall idea is for you to take a text that is 2500 years old and make it personally meaningful and relevant. Don't worry, I will help you explore the verses and make connections, especially if the Torah portion is particularly difficult.

You and I will meet four or five times in the weeks leading up to you becoming b.mitzvah. **I now utilize an automatic scheduling program so your parent can schedule on their own without having to call our office.** Feel free to schedule our meetings back to back with your meetings with Cantor Berlin if that is convenient. Generally we will meet in person, however, meeting via Zoom remains an option.

**Before our first meeting, I ask that you read the English translation of your verses of Torah. (Depending on the verses, it may be helpful to read additional English verses before and after to better understand the full story.) You can find the English verses in your Torah booklet.**

During our first meeting we will explore and review your portion in general and verses of Torah in particular. By the end of your second meeting, you should have a general idea of the lesson you'd like to teach.

Once the d'var Torah is complete (after four or five sessions) you should begin to practice reading it out loud so that you can be more familiar and comfortable with it. You will also practice reading your d'var Torah during your rehearsal with Cantor Berlin.

You may also want to use these additional helpful web resources:

**[www.myjewishlearning.com](http://www.myjewishlearning.com) (look under Texts→Weekly Torah Commentaries);**

**[www.ReformJudaism.org](http://www.ReformJudaism.org) (look under Learning→Torah)**

**Finally, an Important Note for Parents:** I encourage you to study the portion and the supplemental materials with your child. This will familiarize you with the portion, help you better understand what they are learning, and enable you to have meaningful conversations about Torah and life with your child. Please discuss what they are learning, help clarify questions (as best as possible) and encourage your child. You may even suggest some ideas about how to make it relevant to their lives. However, please let your child prepare the early drafts of the *d'var Torah* on their own and review first with Rabbi Briskin. You can help fine tune the *d'var Torah* closer to its completion.

Thank you for your assistance, understanding, and partnership.

I look forward to sharing in this sacred journey with you.

*L'shalom,*

Rabbi Charles K. Briskin

## One Page Outline for the D'var Torah

The *d'var Torah* is normally 2-3 pages (or 600-900 words), printed and double-spaced. To help you prepare, we've provided this outline below for you to follow if you choose.

The first two words of your *d'var Torah* should be: Shabbat Shalom!

### First Paragraph:

What is the name of your portion? What book of the Torah and which specific chapters does it come from? What happens in the entire portion and/or in the verses you are reading. Please use the "Introduction to the Parasha" (post it note tab #1) page in the purple/blue "*Parashat Ha'Shavuah: The Weekly Torah Portion*" booklet, and other sources that Rabbi Briskin provides.

### Second Paragraph:

What is the most interesting thing that happens in the portion? Why is it interesting to you? What questions do you have when reading these verses?

### Third Paragraph:

What do some Jewish thinkers have to say about this portion? The *Parashat Ha'shavuah* book and other handouts provided by Rabbi Briskin will provide some guidance to answer this question.

### Fourth Paragraph:

What are your own thoughts about what these other thinkers have to say and teach? Do you agree with what others think? Or do you disagree? Why?

### Fifth Paragraph:

Can you make a personal connection to the idea or subject you find most interesting? Can you give an example of something that you experience in your own life that connects you to the Torah portion? If not, can you offer some of your own general ideas and comments?

### Sixth Paragraph:

What does this portion and the ideas you have written about so far teach you about what it means to be a b.mitzvah, a person of responsibility?

### Seventh Paragraph:

Conclusion—take everything you've written and summarize it two to three sentences.

(While you are not required to talk about your mitzvah project during the *d'var Torah*, hopefully we can connect it in a way that makes sense. Otherwise, you will have the opportunity to talk about it at a different part of the service.)

The last sentence of your *d'var Torah* should be: "Please join with me in singing *She-he-che-yanu*." (You, Cantor Berlin and I will lead the chanting in Hebrew. We will provide the text for you.)