

D'VAR TORAH OVERVIEW

Again note that this is an area we will be examining as we participate in the Bar Mitzvah Revolution with the intention of making this a more significant part of becoming bar or bat mitzvah.

D'VAR TORAH OVERVIEW

Students have the option of creating a traditional d'var torah that is an oral teaching of the torah portion. Students may instead choose to a more creative alternative that could include a visual art piece, drama presentation, etc. Whether the more traditional teaching (speech) or alternative, the d'var torah should include the following pieces/address the following questions

1. Read through your Torah portion. Write a paragraph summary of the whole portion, not just what you are chanting. You should identify where it fits into the *Torah story*, which is the story of the Jewish people told throughout the Torah.
2. Your d'var Torah should answer some of the following questions – write some bullet point answers to them.
 - a. What does this mean for me?
 - b. How do the words or messages of my portion fit into the story of the Jewish people? How am I part of that story?
 - c. How does this portion help me understand how I think about being Jewish? Or how does this portion connect my experience of being Jewish with others who came before me?
3. Identify a significant question or an idea you are excited about that comes out of your portion and write it in a sentence or two.

PARAGRAPH OUTLINE FOR A TRADITIONAL D'VAR TORAH

Paragraph I: For a d'var Torah: “The name of my/our Torah portion is _____, which means _____. It comes from the book of _____.”

For a d'var haftarah: “My/our haftarah comes from the book of _____ and corresponds to the Torah portion _____.” Add your portion summary here.

Paragraph II: Introduce questions or ideas your portion raises and why they matter to you and how you think about being Jewish. Sometimes the use of a question is a good way to get the congregation to focus on what you are teaching.

Paragraph III: Several options

- ❖ A researched response, from a text or from an interview with somebody you know.
- ❖ An example of two of your main point (this could be from your portion or an experience you or somebody you know has had).
- ❖ Use “Some people say/believe” or “I think...”

Paragraph IV: A continuation of paragraph 3. In this paragraph use a different kind of example, making sure one paragraph focuses on the portion itself. This paragraph can be a more personal reflection.

Paragraph V: Wrap up, highlighting your points from the previous paragraphs. Your final statement should be one about where you stand. It might include a commitment you are making or challenge to the congregation. Refer to the portion in some way.

**Your d'var Torah should be approximately two double-spaced typed pages.*

ALTERNATIVE D'VAR TORAH STRUCTURE

If you are interested in a more creative alternative, it will need to address some of the same issues as in the outline above, but we will meet with you to determine the best structure, depending upon what you would like to do.

Useful Resources:

- Union for Reform Judaism: At <http://urj.org/learning/torah/> there are many resources for studying the weekly parshah (Torah portion), as well as Divrei Torah (Reflections on the Torah portion) for the week and an archive. This is a very good place for people to start.
- Navigating the Bible: <http://bible.ort.org/intro1.asp?lang=1> has some great resources in their "Reference" section: Biblical genealogies, information about plants, animals, place names etc.
- Kolel: The Adult Centre for Liberal Jewish Learning. <http://www.kolel.org> Many resources for Torah study, including Divrei Torah. Within their site, the link <http://www.kolel.org/torahstory/map.html> has tips for reading the Torah and writing a D'var Torah.
- Torah La-Am (Torah for the People): <http://www.torahproductions.com> This is a really incredible resource for those who want to really delve in. From the main page, open an online account (free, fast and simple). Then just go either to the "Weekly Article" or to the "Torah La-Am Library." Many but not all of the articles are free.
- <http://G-dcast.com> Wonderful, brief, funny, animated insights into the Torah portion.