

HOW TO PREPARE FOR YOUR STUDY SESSION WITH THE RABBI

1. The name of both your Torah and Haftarah portion, as well as your verses can be found on the upper left hand corner of the blue and gray URJ Booklet in your yellow folder. Please note that an entire Torah and Haftarah portion might be several chapters with lots of verses. Your particular portion of Torah and Haftarah is just a section of the whole portion, with each B'nei Mitzvah reading approximately 12 verses of Torah and 3 verses of Haftarah.
2. To familiarize you with your Torah/Haftarah portions, there are commentary, essays, and stories about each in your URJ booklet. Please do your best to read and review them—these are designed to help you to understand your entire Torah and Haftarah portions.
3. To know which speech you are responsible for at your Bar or Bat mitzvah, please look at the white label on the yellow folder.
 - If your folder says that you are “B,” you will write about the Torah portion.
 - If your folder says that you are “A,” you will write about the Haftarah portion
 - If you are a single Bar/Bat Mitzvah, you will write about the Torah portion.
 - If you are in a triple, and are “C,” you will write about the Torah portion.
4. To locate your particular portion and verse, find the blue and gray URJ Booklet that is in your yellow folder. The label on the front of this booklet has the page number of your Torah and Haftarah portions. In the blue/gray URJ book, turn to the page listed on the white label. You will see that the English, numbered verse by verse, is side-by side with the Hebrew. Locate the verse where your section begins and read the English translation.
5. Once you have read all these items, you are ready to get started on your Torah or Haftarah worksheet. Please do not worry if you don't understand all this while preparing your worksheet. That's why you have your study session with the Rabbi!

How to Write an Excellent D'var Torah

1. The purpose of a *D'var Torah* (teaching of the Torah/Haftarah portion): is to teach a lesson that you think is valuable for people today. Every good *D'var Torah* knows what its point is - what it wants to teach. **So: for your *Torah* or *Haftarah* portion, based on what we learned, what point do you want to teach?** What does the *Torah/Haftarah* say to help people to lead a better life?
2. Your *D'var Torah* is strongest when all the parts work together to teach and reinforce the message that you want to teach. You should keep things as brief as possible - two pages, double-spaced, is a good average length.
3. Once you know your point, there are tools to writing an excellent *D'var Torah*. How you “open” is very important. Begin with “Shabbat Shalom.” Next: can you think of a joke, a story, maybe something that really happened to you that relates to the point you want to make and will grab people’s attention? It doesn’t have to be about anything Jewish. Humor is ok to use, as long as it is appropriate to the synagogue and relevant to your point.
4. How you move from one point to another is important, too. I call that “framing” and “transitioning”. For example, you might say something like “The *Torah* teaches us three important lessons about how to treat people who are in need. The first is . . . Next . . .”
5. Your second paragraph/section should contain a brief summary of the *Torah/Haftarah* portion, connecting it to your introduction and showing how the portion teaches the point you want to make. ***Your point/message should be made here in a simple, declarative sentence.*** You should identify your portion; for example, you might say: “Our *Torah* portion this Shabbat is *Lech L'cha*, and it comes from the book of Genesis.”
6. Your third paragraph/section should apply your message to life today - in your own life; in school; in your family; around the world - wherever you think that the lesson would help make the world better. Please give specific examples and be clear as to how they illustrate your message.
7. In your fourth paragraph/section, describe one of your mitzvah projects - what it was, why you chose it, and what it means to you. If you can connect them with the theme of your *D'var Torah*, that’s even better.

8. If you want to thank people that have contributed to bringing you to this moment, that would be nice. Again, please try to connect it to the theme of your D'var Torah and remember to keep it short. You should acknowledge your partner, if you have one.
9. Come back to your opening story or joke, in order to make your point once again. Please end your D'var Torah with "Shabbat Shalom."
10. When you type, please keep the following things in mind:
 - a. Your heading should include the following things:
 - i. Your name
 - ii. Reader A, B, C or single
 - iii. Name of your Torah/Haftarah portion
 - iv. Date you celebrate bar/bat mitzvah
 - b. Please double-space, so there is room for me to comment.
 - c. Please use a large font, say 15 - that will make it easier for you to deliver.
 - d. Please put page numbers at the bottom, so that we can keep things in order.
11. Your 1st draft is due one week from today.
 - a. Please print out a copy and turn it in to Lynne Yura. If you need to email it, Lynne's email address is rabbiaadmin@congregation-betham.org)
12. Final draft: please print a copy and turn it in to Lynne.
13. If you have questions or need help, please call (847-459-1677) or email the Rabbi Bellows at rabbibellows@congregation-betham.org.

Outline

- I. Shabbat Shalom; Opening story, joke
- II. Summary of portion & point that you want to teach
- III. Application of your message to life today
- IV. Mitzvah project paragraph
- V. Thank you paragraph
- VI. Closing and Shabbat Shalom

TORAH WORKSHEET

This outline is to be filled out before you have your meeting with the rabbi.

***** You can find information about your Torah portion in the blue & gray URJ booklet in your yellow folder. There are introductions, commentaries, essays and stories. You will also want to read your Torah portion in English.** Please read through the entire English text of your Torah portion (not just the verses you are reading aloud). You will be summarizing your portion in this outline. From the highlights of your portion that you write down, you will choose the point or points you want to teach us about in your D'var Torah. Please use additional paper to complete your outline, if necessary.

OUTLINE

- I. Introduction to D'var Torah: Joke, story, or example relating to your portion (*see #3 of How to Write and Excellent D'var Torah*)

- II. Summary of the important points in your Torah portion. What is your Torah portion about? Please offer a brief summary of the portion and conclude this section/paragraph with your teaching point. (*see #5 of How to Write an Excellent D'var Torah*)

- III. Explain the point you want to teach and apply it to life today. What is the message of your teaching point and why is it important to learn about and understand today? (*see #6 of How to Write an Excellent D'var Torah.*)

- IV. Please describe one or two of your Mitzvah projects and how they might relate to your portion. (*See #7 of How to Write an Excellent D'var Torah*) If you do not yet know what your Mitzvah Project will be, skip this section and you will write this paragraph about 2 months before your Bat/Bar Mitzvah service.

- V. Thank You paragraph (*see #8 of How to Write an Excellent D'var Torah*)

- VII. Closing and Shabbat Shalom

Don't Forget:

- **Double Space and use large font.**
- **Put page numbers at the bottom of the page.**
- **Title your D'var Torah using the format in #10 of How to Write an Excellent D'var Torah**
- **The first draft of your speech is due one week after your speech appointment.** Please turn it in to Lynne Yura in the temple office.
- ***Email your final draft*** to Lynne Yura in the temple office (rabbiadmin@congregation-betham.org). Keep a copy at home and practice many times before your Bar or Bat Mitzvah service!