

THE DVAR TORAH – INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE BAR/BAT MITZVAH

A *dvar torah* is a “word of Torah”, a lesson that one draws from a text to teach to others. You will study the Torah portion with Rabbi to find something meaningful to you, and then you will write a *dvar torah* to teach this insight to the congregation during the Saturday morning service.

Becoming a bar/bat mitzvah is about becoming a Jewish adult. We show that we are entering adulthood in our community by doing mitzvot that Jewish adults do like leading prayers, chanting Torah, and teaching Torah. By writing and then delivering a *dvar torah* from the *bima*, you will be fulfilling this important mitzvah of teaching.

Step 1—Read the whole Torah portion in English, not just the verses that you are chanting. While you are reading, you can look at the commentary for clarification of some of the verses. After you have read the portion, write down three things from the portion that you would like to discuss with Rabbi. This can be a “big picture” question like “Why are there two creation stories in *Bereshit*?” Or, it can be more specific like, “What are *tzitzit*?” You can write down something that is troubling or intriguing or something you don’t understand, etc. This is the assignment after the first meeting with Rabbi.

Step 2—You will discuss these three things in your second meeting with Rabbi. He will try to bring ideas that Jewish thinkers of the past have said about these topics. Once all three topics have been discussed, you will choose one to write about in your *dvar torah*.

Step 3—Write the *dvar torah* before your third meeting. It is helpful to email it to Rabbi Satz before the meeting. rabbisatz@templebnaior.org

Here is a brief outline of what a *dvar torah* might look like.

- IV. This week’s Torah portion is __
 - C. In this week’s portion we find the verse, “_____”
 - D. This Rabbi explains the verse this way . . .
- V. I think the Torah is saying this
 - C. How this point relates to your life (might include a personal story)
 - D. What can we all learn from this?
- VI. Summary and “*Shabbat Shalom*”

A *dvar torah* should be about two pages double-spaced.