

D'VAR TORAH WORKSHOP



B'nai Mitzvah D'var Torah Rubric

I. Family History

Think about your family history—any interesting stories from the old country? From your past? What was going on Jewishly in your family? How did any of this impact how you ended up here at CRS and how is this history linked to you becoming B'nai Mitzvah? We want a lot of “you” in this speech. Let your family’s history wash over you and write your own reaction to your family’s history.

II. The Meaning of B'nai Mitzvah

How does your family story (from part 1) link to/inform the meaning of you becoming B'nai Mitzvah? What does this sacred milestone mean to you and your family? What will be different now that you will be expected to make decisions about your Jewish identity?

III. Theme/Idea Introduction

Write 1 sentence introducing what's happening in your Torah portion that sets the stage for the one core theme you will focus upon.

IV. Core theme to focus upon

Write 2-3 sentences about the theme you are choosing to focus upon from your Torah portion and why. To help you find the theme, do the following:

Find questions you have—what surprises you, disturbs you, what's in conflict with each other?

Pick something you have a lot to say about—do you want to inspire the congregation to think differently, to do something differently? This should be an expression of your thinking and values.



V. Explicate a core theme

Share and explain the piece/theme of the Torah portion and how it relates to your life. Be specific and give examples from your own life experiences. We want to hear examples that happen to you, not examples that you see affecting others. How does this text inform your life, your decision making? What did you learn to apply to your life?

VI. Mitzvah Involvement


Write about your mitzvah work here at CRS and RSS and how it ties in to the meaning of you becoming B'nai Mitzvah. Examples could include Study and Action Unit for CRS Sholom Discoveries students, the Philanthropy project at RSS, CRS Mitzvah Day, and your CRS volunteer projects. Are there ways that you have started to take on mitzvot-both ethical and ritual?

VII. What's Next?

Write about what comes next for you...how do you see yourself continuing with your Jewish education/connection to Judaism and to CRS? Now that you are B'nai Mitzvah, how will this affect your Jewish practice/identity going forward? Will you join the 8th grade NOLA trip, chant Torah on the High Holidays, visit the sick, do Shabbat blessings at home, make a shiva minyan? What will you do?

The 10 Commandments of Writing & Delivering a Great D'var Torah

1. Be personal
2. Use real stories from your life-think 13 year old examples
3. Write about what will be interesting for the congregation and something they can connect to
4. Focus on one core idea
5. Identify how you are linked to a larger story


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6. Recognize how important you are to Tikkun Olam
 7. Practice reciting your D'var Torah
 8. Speak slowly and clearly
 9. Look up at the congregation
 10. Enjoy the moment!

Writing Your D'var Torah: Next Steps



Step 1: Review the sample Divrei Torah you will receive in a follow up email.

Step 2: Craft a draft including parts I, II, III, and IV of the D'var Torah Rubric.



Step 3: You will be contacted by the clergy assistant 2½-3 months before your date (or in April if you have a Sept/Oct date) to schedule a D'var Torah review with Rabbi Spratt, Weitzman, Karol or Goldberg. Prior to this meeting, please review your Torah portion and be ready to discuss it. Please follow the directions in the email and sign up for an appointment through our online program, Schedulicity.



Step 4: Further polish and hone your D'var Torah based on discussion and feedback received.

Step 5: About a month before your B'nai Mitzvah date you will be contacted by the assistant of your officiating rabbi to set up an appointment for a final D'var Torah review. You will be asked to do further work on your draft.