

## Writing your Bar/Bat Mitzvah drash

Read the Torah portion or haftarah and commentaries (see below for resources) and find one idea, question about the text, interesting word, general theme, etc. that interests you and speaks to you. Ask yourself: what is the Torah trying to teach us in this portion? Why is this portion part of our sacred text? What message does it hold for our lives? It is preferable to focus on the third of the parasha that we are reading in the current year of the triennial cycle.

BEFORE you start to write your drash, know your ONE central point that you want to make. Even if you don't have an absolute answer to a question that you ask (it's ok and very Jewish to ask questions without knowing the answer), make sure you have ONE central concept or point that people can walk away with. There is a temptation when giving a drash to mention every thought you ever had, but that makes for a jumbled, hard to grasp drash; the best drashot have ONE main idea.

Ground your thoughts in a text - it can be a verse, a commentary, or an overall theme from the parasha, but make sure your ideas flow out of the text itself.

Have a beginning, middle, and end.

Brief and concise is better than long and rambling. Your drash should be no more than 5 minutes and should be 2-3 typed, double-spaced pages long.

Respect the Torah and the congregation, even if you offer a challenge.

Make an outline before you start to write. Here is a suggested outline, but feel free to be creative and begin with a story, a question or something to grab the attention of your listeners. Also, begin and end with "Shabbat Shalom" and make sure to mention the name of your parasha (portion) in the beginning of your drash.

1. Introduction to the portion - give a BRIEF overview of what's in the parasha. DON'T mention every single thing in the parasha, only what's particularly relevant to your teaching.
2. Raise your particular topic by quoting a verse, citing a commentary, asking a question raised by the text, pointing out a problem in text, etc. If you are speaking on the Haftarah, you may discuss how it relates to your Torah portion.
3. Develop your topic through: an answer to your question, an explanation of your idea, a resolution to the problem from another textual source, a story or an example.
4. Make your teaching personally relevant to yourself, to the congregation, or to our current world.
5. Conclude by reinforcing your main idea - what is the one central thought we are supposed to take away?

**A few resources in English for preparing a drash:**

Commentaries in Chumashim like Etz Hayim

In the Reference section of our library:

Rashi on the Parasha

Ramban (Nachmanides)

Nehama Lebowitz's Studies in . . .

The Torah Anthology - for a collection of Midrashim on the Parasha

Websites with good commentaries -

[Learn.jtsa.edu](http://Learn.jtsa.edu) - click on Torah Commentary

[MyJewishLearning.com](http://MyJewishLearning.com) - click on "This week's Torah Portion"

[Aish.com](http://Aish.com) - click on Torah portion