

## Guidelines for preparing a D'var Torah for a BatMitzvah

- Decide on a theme. It can relate to the weekly Torah reading, your name or even the particular time of year (i.e. Chanukah, Rosh Chodesh etc.)
- Research your theme with someone who is knowledgeable in Jewish sources and who can act as a guide. Research widely and examine primary sources like the Chumash, Midrash and Talmud as well as secondary sources like Rashi, Ramban, and others.
- Distil all your material and think of one message that you'd like to get across. A good D'var Torah never has more than one message. People get confused when you start throwing too many ideas at them.
- Once you've chosen your key message start fleshing it out. The following structure may be useful:

Opening	You need something very brief but catchy so that it will grab your listeners attention. If you don't interest them in the first 30 seconds they will just tune out. Suggestions: a tasteful joke, a reference to something contemporary or a brief story.
Text	Every D'var Torah must relate to a Jewish text. At this point you will present a primary text and raise a question or observation about it.
Answer	You will present an answer based on a secondary Jewish source.
The Message	This is the main point of your D'var Torah! Here you will present your key message based on your question and answer above
Illustration	Develop and expand your message possibly using a parable or story or a link with something contemporary
Personalize	Relate the message back to yourself. Explain why this message has meaning for you personally.
Conclude	End your D'var with an elegant sentence or phrase.

- A D'var Torah is NOT a summary of the Sidrah. Such summaries are boring and patronising to your listeners. Only summarise what is absolutely necessary to present your text and if possible avoid summaries altogether.
- It is important that the D'var Torah is in your own words. Your audience will immediately detect it if you are reading words that someone else wrote for you. The role of the teacher is to guide you through this process, NOT to write it for you.
- Brevity is the key. A D'var Torah should not exceed 6 minutes. Working to this time frame will help you write a tight and meaningful D'var Torah. You will have to ask yourself at each stage before putting in material; "How will this material enhance my message?" If you feel it will not directly enhance your key message leave it OUT! Remember, less is often more. No one will complain that your D'var Torah was too short so long as it is clear and well structured.
- Practice reading your D'var Torah and time yourself so that you know exactly how long it will take you to deliver it.
- Show your D'var Torah to the Rabbi a month before the BatMitzvah. That way if there are any substantial changes that need to be made you will have ample time to make them.
- The Key to any good public speech is to make the message your own and to really feel passionate about it.
- Finally enjoy yourself. This is your big day. You have a great message to get across and everyone there is listening to you. A relaxed speaker relaxes her audience.