

# Bar/Bat Mitzvah Monthly Activity



## PREPARING FOR YOUR D'RASH (PERSONAL REFLECTION)

Next month you will meet with Rabbi Bernstein or Rabbi Saxe to begin preparing your d'rash. Your d'rash is your sermon, your chance to share with the congregation your thoughts relating to your Torah portion, Judaism or simply becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah. Here's how the process will work:

- In your first meeting with the rabbi, you will choose your message and begin to form an outline for the d'rash together.
- Between then and your second meeting, you will write a draft of your drash (700-1200 words) and email it to the rabbi before the meeting. This way the two of you can read it together, make changes directly in the document, and finish the meeting with a new version that reflects the work you did together.
- You and the rabbi will then decide together whether you will need any additional meetings or drafts.

*Here are three things to keep in mind about your d'rash:*

- It should have one main message.
- That message should be relevant for everyone.
- There should be a clear "takeaway" that people are left with about how we can be better people.

In order to prepare for your first meeting with the rabbi:

1. Read the summary of your Torah portion, which is in the Speech tab in your notebook.
2. Read the English translation of your Torah portion, which is in the Speech tab in your notebook. The particular verses you will be reading at your Bar/Bat Mitzvah are highlighted in yellow. At the front of this notebook, you will also see a personalized document that lists the name of your Torah portion and the verses you are chanting. It is important to know what part of the portion you are reading, although you do not have to limit yourself to that part of the portion in writing your d'rash.
3. It may also be helpful to look at [www.reformjudaism.org/learning/torah-study](http://www.reformjudaism.org/learning/torah-study), where you can find quality commentaries on the weekly portion, and [www.G-dcast.com](http://www.G-dcast.com), which has great videos of each portion (type the portion name into the search line).
4. Now, answer the following questions. They are designed to help you start thinking about themes from your portion, Judaism or other aspects of your life that you might want to talk about.

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*3 month activity continued...*

1. What are one or two themes or lessons in the Torah portion that are meaningful to you?

2. Have you had any experiences that have taught you lessons about life (e.g. a challenge you have faced; a trip you took; a volunteer project; your Mitzvah Project; something you are learning in school)? What are they and what have they taught you? (One or more of these may fit into your speech – don't worry about relating them to your theme yet, because you and your rabbi can work on that together.)

3. What does becoming Bat or Bar Mitzvah mean to you? How do you think you should be seen differently? How do you think you should think or act differently?

4. How do your Jewish identity and the Jewish values you have learned so far shape you as a person?

5. As you reflect in advance of your meeting with the rabbi, keep in mind that you don't have to come to this meeting with a topic already chosen. It will be helpful, though, if you have come up with a few themes and ideas as possibilities. Have fun with these big questions!



## Monthly Service Attendance



### **MACHBERET T'FILLAH: SERVICE JOURNAL**

*3 Months Before the Bar/Bat Mitzvah*

Attend Shabbat morning services or a Mincha afternoon service at Temple Rodef Shalom. Pay particular attention to all the honors that are given at the service: the aliyot, the passing of the Torah, the dressing of the Torah, etc... For the aliyot, did the people reading or chanting the Torah blessings begin by touching the Torah with their tallit or siddur, then kissing it? Did they pronounce the Hebrew correctly? Did they look like they felt honored to be called to the Torah? Think about who you are asking to do the aliyot. How can you make sure they know what to do when they are called up? Did grandparents come up for the passing of the Torah? Was that a meaningful part of the service? Who came up to dress the Torah? Who will come up for your Bar/Bat Mitzvah?