

Guide for the Perplexed Dvar-Giver

Mazal tov and thank you for taking an interest in giving a dvar Torah at Congregation Beth Am! We take pride in our members' participation in all aspects of Beth Am, especially in religious services. The dvar Torah is a chance for you to learn, teach, and encourage deepening understanding of and involvement with the Torah and Judaism. There is no need to know Hebrew.

What is a dvar Torah? Typically, the dvar is a brief talk given during religious services. You may give a brief summary of the Torah portion of the week (the parashat ha-shavua) and then focus on specific aspects of the portion, such as how to find its relevance in our lives. Occasionally, the focus is on the Haftarah portion for that week, a holiday, life cycle event, or customs - such as mourning practices. Less frequently, someone reads a short story or teaches how to do something, such as how to do the priestly blessing. This is our time to study Torah. Even taking "Torah" broadly, this is not the place for personal anecdotes or political speeches.

How long? The dvar should last no more than ten minutes, including discussion time. Please be attentive to the time. If we are running late, shorten your dvar accordingly. Try to make the time in advance of services to clue the service leader (shaliah tzibur) about what you will cover so that person does not discuss the same area.

How do you prepare? Study the portion of the Torah and Haftarah. Which portion? The person scheduling your dvar and the service leader are good people to check with. Check a Jewish calendar for the Torah and Haftarah portion as well as holidays and significant events. Look at several commentaries – printed and on-line. It is appropriate to credit your sources. This is amateur to the extent that we are "amateurs" - that is, we love what we are doing and we do it for the love of it.

For material, there are numerous commentaries, including in the Hertz edition of the Chumash (Bible) that we use. On-line sources include:

www.aish.com

www.jewishrecon.org/divrei-Ttorah

www.chabad.org

www.uscj.org

www.urj.org

www.myjewishlearning.com

We take seriously this opportunity to learn and to share with the congregation. Please encourage mutual respect by spending appropriate effort to research and present. If you do not have adequate time to prepare, contact the person who scheduled your dvar as soon as possible so that someone else will be asked to handle the dvar. Questions? Please ask the service leader or a member of the Ritual Committee.

Toda raba! (Thank you!)

Congregation Beth Am Ritual Committee, January, 2014

