



## Rabbi Darren's 7 Steps to write a great speech for your Bar or Bat Mitzvah

Sharing your ideas about your Torah portion and about this moment in your life is a great opportunity. Here are seven steps to consider along with an example of a bar mitzvah speech. Good luck and have fun - and most importantly, make it personal and relevant to your life!

- Step 1: Greet everyone with "Shabbat Shalom."
- Step 2. Talk about your Torah portion and provide a short overview
- Step 3. Explain or discuss a topic related to your Torah reading that interests you
- Step 4. Why does the topic interest you? How do you relate to it personally?
- Step 5. Provide a real life example in your life to bring your teaching to life.
- Step 6. Recap your teaching - briefly
- Step 7. Thank parents, siblings, teachers, friends, etc

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### Sample B'nai Mitzvah Speech

#### ***Step 1: Greet everyone with "Shabbat Shalom."***

Shabbat Shalom!

#### ***Step 2. Talk about your Torah portion and provide a short overview***

I have just read from Parshat Emor, in the book of Leviticus. In this reading, The Eternal One is telling rules to the Israelites through Moses, famous rules such as "An Eye for an Eye", as an example. Now most Bar-Mitzvah boys would say something at this moment in their speech that an eye for an eye teaches them about responsibility and becoming a man - or something that everybody knew was coming. But, I plan to do something a little different, and tell you that I disagree with eye for an eye.

#### ***Step 3. Explain or discuss a topic related to your Torah reading that interests you***

Eye for an eye in the biblical way must be taken in a literal sense. In a literal sense it means that the punishment shall be an exact reflection of the crime. If I cut your hand off, my hand gets cut off. If you kill me, you will die. That exact punishment is something I will call, the

biblical eye for an eye. In ancient times, eye for an eye was necessary because people didn't have another way of enforcing justice. But with modern systems of law that have other ways, eye for an eye is no longer relevant.

***Step 4. Why does the topic interest you? How do you relate to it personally?***

There are other ways of performing justice without using revenge. As Gandhi once said "An eye for an eye will only make the whole world blind." Eye for an eye doesn't do us any good because all eye for an eye does is bring more suffering. If one person dies, eye for an eye says that the killer should too, but why would we want more death?

I hope that we no longer need to cause double suffering every time there is a crime. We still have consequences and we can have much more effective punishments and so we must interpret eye for an eye more deeply. We must have people compensate others for actions that hurt them. This is a form of justice that does not imply violence or further suffering than necessary. It goes hand in hand with creating a better world and learning your lesson.

***Step 5. Provide a real life example in your life to bring your teaching to life***

Let me give you a real life example of something I witnessed about three years ago. I was playing on a baseball team called the Pawsox. On this team there was a kid who always liked to act like a professional baseball player. He would swagger around with his expensive batting gloves constantly on, chewing his gum. One game, I was sitting in the dugout and he was up to bat next. We never had an on deck circle where the batter up next could take some practice swings like the MLB stadiums did, but Darwin liked to pretend. Darwin started taking his swings right at the entrance of our dugout. Well, another kid walks out of the dugout, not paying much attention when BAM!, the kid got hit in the face. Luckily he was not injured too badly. But if eye for an eye was interpreted in the Biblical sense, that kid could have whacked Darwin right back in the face. And what good would come of that? We would have two kids on the floor, and two less players in the game. This situation shows that if society was ruled by eye for an eye in

the Biblical sense, society would be at a lower standard because every time there was an injury or a theft, there would be double the pain.

In this example, there was a punishment. He had to sit in the stands for the rest of the game, could not play, and did not sit with the team. This was not revenge, this was a punishment that fit the crime, mostly. He also apologized, he learned his lesson, and the kid and Darwin went on to finish the season.

**Step 6. Recap your teaching - briefly**

In conclusion, disagreeing with the biblical eye for an eye and coming up with my own interpretation has taught me a lot about becoming a bar mitzvah. I've learned that I can interpret things my own way, I cannot just accept everything that is in front of me, I need to read it my own way. That is what it means to me to be an adult.

**Step 7. Thank parents, siblings, teachers, friends, etc**

I want to thank my parents for raising me, Grandpa Larry, Grandma Bobby, Grandma Kate, Grandpa Norby, and Grandma Judy. My aunts, uncles, cousins, and the rest of my family. Thank you to my brother Bix, though if there really was eye for an eye, I don't think he would still be alive. Thank you Rabbi Darren and Chesney for preparing me for this day and all of my friends!

Shabbat Shalom!

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*Please print it in double space. When you read your speech, read it slowly, clearly, and take your time. If you ever have a question, ask us for help. Good luck, we are proud of you!*