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RABBI NORMAN LAMM
THE JEWISH CENTER

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BAR MITZVAH ADDRESS TO ANDREW GREENSPAN
(son of George Greenspan)

The first verse in the Biblical portion read on the Sabbath of your Bar Mitzvah contains four elements, which together constitute a set of ideals worthy of inspiring any young man just entering into the life of Jewish responsibility.

We read that Noah was ish tzaddik tammim hayah be'dorotav, a pious man, whole-hearted in his generation.

First, he was ish -- a man. Today you become a man, in the sense that in reaching your majority you are expected to undertake all your manly and human obligations. You must become sensitive to the wants and the sentiments and sensitivities of your fellow men. A true ish is one who always responds to the call of his neighbors, who tries in every way to better the human situation, to improve the lot of his fellow men -- whether religiously or economically or socially or politically.

The second thing: tzaddik, devout. To become a Jew means to enter into a career of devotion to God. Without this religious element, all of Jewish life is empty and vacuous. This is the time that you must affirm your Jewish heritage and pledge yourself to remain responsible to the Almighty.

But in addition to acknowledging your responsibilities to

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your fellow men as an ish and your responsibilities to God as a tzaddik, you must also be, third, tammim: whole-hearted. You have certain obligations to yourself. You must preserve your psychological and spiritual integrity. In a world which increasingly tends to pull us apart, you must always be honest with and to yourself, you must never act one way in one situation, and another in another situation. There must be integrity and not hypocrisy, wholeness and not fragmentation. Always, always be honest to yourself -- tammim.

Finally, you must do these things be'dorotav -- in your generations. Noah was a pious man and whole-hearted be'dorotav -- notice the plural: generations. Not one generation, but plural -- be'dorotav. There are some people who are "one-generation" people. Either they live completely in the past, unaware of contemporary conditions, or they live completely in the present, totally ignorant of the past. Many young people today are such "one-generation" people. And that is a shame. The so-called "generation gap" is a disgrace for the generations on either side of the gap. To be mature means for you to realize that neither you nor your contemporaries suddenly appeared in the world without a history. You must understand that you are but the latest link in the long chain of generations. You must appreciate that, young as you are, you carry a very real though invisible burden on your young shoulders: generations and generations of Jewish history, going back to Abraham and Moses. You must be able

to dip into the past in order to understand the present and strive for the future. You must be a "many-generation" person, not a "one-generation" man. You will, I hope, understand especially that as you become Bar Mitzvah in this particular House of God, here too you are be'dorotav -- in line with generations. This Synagogue was one which your grandfather helped found, in which your grandmother was a member of the Sisterhood, and in which your parents are honored members of the Board of Trustees.

Take these four elements with you as you begin your Jewish career, and in return may the Lord give you His threefold blessing.