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RABBI NORMAN LAMM

JANUARY 21, 1967

SIDRA BO BAR MITZVAH - TEFFILIN

(Dov Goldman)

(Although his Bar Mitzvah was the week after,  
I used a passage from Bo because his Bar Mitzvah  
pilpul dealt with this subject matter)

In your discourse you spoke of the law of Rabbi Akiva  
that one need not lay the teffilin on the Sabbath, because teffilin  
is a "sign" (ote) and the Sabbath is similarly a "sign", and there-  
fore if one observes the Sabbath he is exempt from laying the  
teffilin.

The great-grandson of the Besht, author of Degel Mahane  
Ephraim, sees this in the words of the Sidra in which God tells  
Moses to come to Pharoah le'maan shiti ototai be'kirbo -- in order  
to place my signs against him. Literally, this means in order to  
perform wonders and miracles on Pharoah and the Egyptians which  
would testify to the power of God in redeeming Israel. However,  
the word ote means that only the sign in sense of a miracle, but  
also sign in sense of a reminder. This means, says our author,  
that out of the agony of Pharoah and Egypt, the source of so much

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of our bitterness and persecution, we will emerge with a great victory: two "signs" that God will give us and that will be with us till the end of days -- the Sabbath and the teffilin.

May you remember this, for throughout life each man faces his Pharoah and his Egypt, not once but many times. From every such event, from every such crisis, may you emerge with the spark of holiness and nobility and sublimity -- your "sign".