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RABBI NORMAN LAMM

JANUARY 14, 1967

BAR MITZVAH - SIDRA BO

(Murray Kleinhaus)

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In this Sidra which speaks of the exodus from Egypt, the reading of the Torah concludes with the law of the teffilin. The Torah describes the teffilin both as ote (sign) and zikaron (memorial).

How is it a sign? In Egypt the laws of nature and history were reversed, the powerful were defeated and the weak prevailed -- and this, because of the Divine Will. Similarly, the teffilin are placed on the left hand (yad kaheh) which is the sign of weakness, to teach us that we, too, can prevail despite our weakness if our left hand, symbol of that weakness, has on it the symbol of the fulfillment of the Divine Will. Not by might nor by power, but by the spirit of the Lord.

This, indeed, is a lesson of all Jewish history: throughout, we have been the few and the despised, and nevertheless we

have survived to this day and shall survive to the end of time.

This is the "memorial" that we are instructed to wear "between
thine eyes", i.e., the memorial must be engraved on our minds
and on our hearts.

May your Bar Mitzvah, symbolized by your beginning to
lay the teffilin, be both a "sign" and a "memorial."