

Bar Mitzvah

An Ancient Ritual Signals Sammy's Entry Into Manhood

Last month at the New Hope Synagog, Roselawn, Samuel Judah Petuchowski, a seventh-grader at Walnut Hills High School, celebrated his Bar Mitzvah. The term is Hebrew and means "Son of the Commandment."

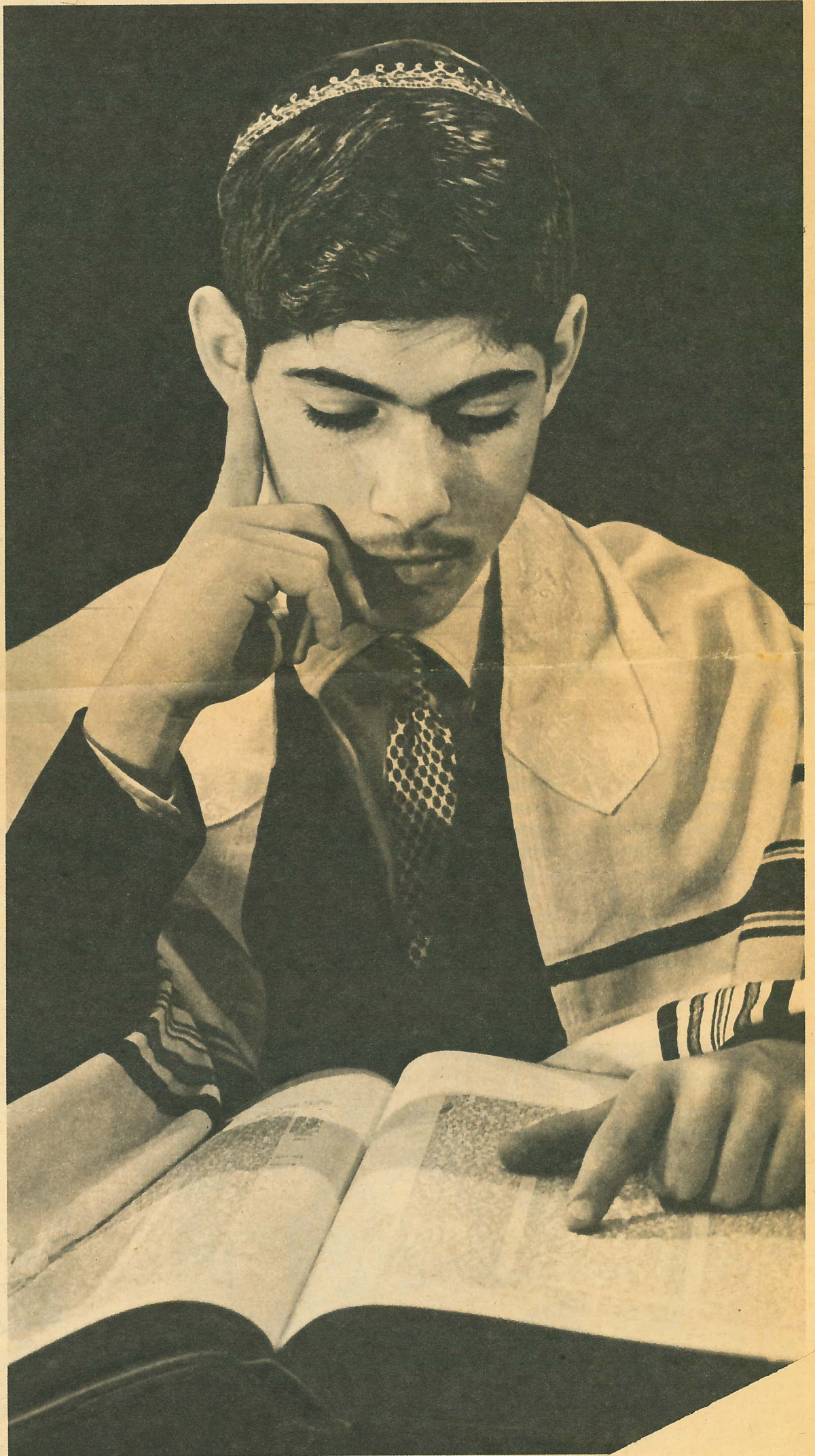
According to Jewish law, Sammy now is an adult Jew, subject to all the moral and ceremonial obligations of the Jewish religion and responsible to God for his own actions.

Actually, Bar Mitzvah is less a celebration than a matter of vital statistics. When a Jewish boy reaches his 13th birthday, he automatically becomes a "Son of the Commandment" and henceforth may be counted as one of the quorum of 10 adult males required for Jewish public worship. He also performs henceforth adult religious duties.

The custom of Bar Mitzvah arose centuries ago as a way to inform the whole congregation that a new adult member joined them. The best way of doing so is to let the young man perform a part of the worship service restricted to adults. These include the recitation of blessings before and after the reading from the Torah scroll; chanting the lesson from the Prophets in Hebrew and chanting a part of the lesson from the Torah scroll itself.

But very few boys do what Sammy did. He chanted the entire lesson from the scroll—Chapters 21 through 24 of Leviticus. He also chanted the lesson from the Prophets—Ezekiel 44:15-31—and he gave a brief address to the congregation.

The Bar Mitzvah marks the end of nine years of preparation, but does not signify the termination of religious studies. It is, however, a joyous milestone in a lifelong process of education.



For Samuel Judah Petuchowski, the Bar Mitzvah clim

—Photos For The Enquirer By Boris Goldenberg