

The Gift of Electronic Gab

"Today I am an e-mail message," Jacob D. Miller of West Bloomfield, Michigan, may say on his February

10th bar mitzvah. His older brother Jason will present him with the 510 responses he received to an Internet message asking people to send Jacob "good wishes, words of wisdom or advice, or just say 'Mazel Tov.'"

Men and women from all walks of life, from over 40 U.S. states and 20 countries—including Australia, Israel, Curacao, France, Argentina, and Italy—responded with poetry, stories, or advice. From Alon Krausz of Scarsdale, New York, came the message, "Advice you want? Just follow your initials—Just Do *Menschlichkeit!*" Hollywood producer, writer, and director James L. Brooks (*Taxi*, *Terms of Endearment*) responded with the bittersweet tale of his own bar mitzvah, telling Jacob, "My father denied he was a Jew, and I myself did not know that I was Jewish until I was 11 years old." Other famous respondents include actor Ed Asner and John Perry Barlow, producer of the rock group the Grateful Dead.

The responses were put into a book to be read aloud at the bar mitzvah party. Says Jason, a sophomore at Michigan State, "Not only is [this] a gift for my brother, but [it] also shows the importance of one of the oldest forms of linking Jews world wide—the bar mitzvah—and one of the newest—the Internet."