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Friday, November 30

Lincoln's "Limp"

By Judy Sokolow

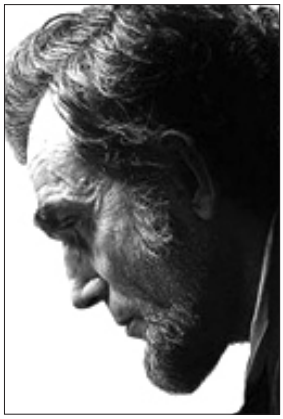
Abraham Lincoln was a transcendently great American president. Yet Steven Spielberg's recently released film *Lincoln* depicts him as a practitioner of political chicanery and manipulation. Thus, the movie poses one of the central problems of politics: Must an individual be calculating and deceitful in order to be a great leader? The question has occasioned some insightful commentary by writers like David Brooks, but perhaps the heart of the matter is best illuminated by the portrait of the patriarch Jacob in this week's Torah portion, Vayishlah.

It was the 13th Amendment to the Constitution that transformed the American Civil War from a military to a moral struggle by declaring that "neither slavery nor involuntary servitude," except as punishment for a crime, "shall exist within the United States." Among the most compelling scenes in Spielberg's *Lincoln* are those portraying the intense wheeling and dealing that Lincoln orchestrated in order to secure the amendment's passage in Congress. The tactics we see him using are dubious enough to raise serious questions about his moral character.

Yet, Brooks calls Lincoln a "hero" for having not merely "high moral vision" but the "courage to take morally hazardous action in order to make that vision a reality." He paints Lincoln as that rare leader, like George Washington or Winston Churchill, who understands that great public good can be accomplished only through the political process and accepts the challenge of engaging in this process while knowing that it will entail a constant struggle to retain an inner moral core.

Indeed, Brooks goes farther, claiming that Lincoln's wisdom derives "precisely from the fact that he is damaged goods." That is a strong claim—but no stronger than what might be said of Jacob.

Jacob, too, used cunning to further what is described as a greater good. He persuaded his elder twin Esau to sell Esau's birthright—their father Isaac's blessing for his first-born son—in exchange for a pot of stew. When the ailing, blind Isaac was ready to bestow the blessing, Jacob connived with his mother to disguise himself as Esau and cheat—there is no other word for it—Esau out of the blessing. Jacob received the blessing for himself—"let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee"—and secured his leadership of the Jewish people. Was Jacob merely revealing a moral flaw? Was he performing an act of political heroism? Could it have been both?



The internal struggle with just these questions can be read into the otherwise inscrutable story, in Genesis 32-33, of what is often referred to as Jacob's wrestling with an angel. Jacob, returning home after an absence of years, sent messengers ahead to tell Esau of his arrival; the messengers returned to say that Esau was coming to meet Jacob—with 400 men. That night, the text tells us, Jacob wrestled with an *ish* (32:26). The word literally means "man," but the preeminent biblical exegete Rashi (1040-1105) identifies Jacob's opponent as Esau's guardian angel.

As Moshe Sokolow has suggested in these pages, perhaps Jacob was wrestling, in his vision or dream, with his own guilty doubts about whether his fraudulent acquisition of his father's blessing was morally justified. The text tells us that during the struggle, Jacob saw *"elohim panim el panim"* (32:31): he encountered something godly—in the sense of epic, or larger than life—face-to-face. The next day, when Jacob and Esau finally met, Jacob told his brother, "*ki al kein ra'iti fanekha kirot penei e-lohim*—for I have seen your face as one sees a godly face" (33:10). In both the nighttime meeting with the angel and the daytime meeting with Esau, Jacob saw a "godly face." And if the *ish* with whom Jacob struggled bore the face of his twin Esau, perhaps the face Jacob saw and the being with whom he struggled were his own.

In this reading, the demon that Jacob laid to rest in his nighttime struggle was his own moral concern over his having acquired his father's blessing through subterfuge. As dawn approached, Jacob's name was changed to "Yisrael," because "thou hast striven with God and with men, and hast prevailed" (32:29). The text links the new name to the verb *sarita*—you have become a *sar*, a "ruler" or "prince" (32:29); but what if we move the dot so that the letter *sin* becomes *shin*? In that case, Jacob has acquired his new name because he has become *yashar*, confident of his moral rectitude and no longer plagued by his doubts.

Yet in the course of subduing his adversary, Jacob suffered an injury to his thigh, which caused him to limp; one may speculate that his leg injury was psychosomatic. There is a price to be paid, even when a great man's compromise of his own morality has been wise and necessary. Thus, the Torah ends the story of Jacob's struggle with this addendum: "Therefore the children of Israel

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eat not the sinew of the thigh-vein which is upon the hollow of the thigh"—the sciatic nerve—"unto this day," because this was the injured sinew that caused Jacob's limp. Moral compromise, even if vindicated, does not leave one unscathed.

This metaphor has found its way into more modern thought. Natan Alterman, who has been described as the "poet of Jewish independence and glorifier of Israel's army," wrote after Israel's War of Independence:

> But may this resurgent nation
> Limp a bit on its thigh,
> Even when the land gives it a new body.
> Let there still be noticeable, even on parade,
> The blemish that the angel made.

Lincoln, too, was a wrestler—literally and figuratively, like Jacob. And in the scars left by Lincoln's compromises, in his "limp," we see the true measure of greatness.

Monday, December 3

A World Without Enemies

By Aryeh Tepper

In Isaac Babel's 1931 short story "Argamak," a Jewish intellectual "thirsting for peace and happiness" joins a Red cavalry division made up of Jew-hating Cossacks. The division commander understands the Jew's strange choice. So, he takes a prized stallion from one of the Cossacks and gives it to the Jew to ride. The Cossack is furious. The Jew, sensing the Cossack's hatred, asks the commander, "Why did you give me an enemy?" Not bothering to disguise his contempt, the commander explains, "I understand you completely. . . . Your aim is to live without making enemies. . . . Everything you do is aimed that way—so you won't have any enemies."

More than 80 years later, Babel's Jews still live.

During Israel's recent mini-war with Hamas, the online *Slate* magazine published an article by its legal writer, Dahlia Lithwick, titled, "I Didn't Come Back to Jerusalem to Be in a War." Lithwick lived in Israel as a child in 1977, the year of Anwar Sadat's visit to the Israeli Knesset. She recently returned there with her children for another year, in part to enlarge their horizons beyond an American world made up of "equal parts comfort and Lego." She did not expect the enlargement to include a war with Hamas.

The article began with a memory of peace—Sadat's visit, in honor of which Lithwick and her little brother "stayed up half the night making an enormous Egyptian flag." It ended with a dream of peace, asserting that, in defiance of the war being waged outside her window, "We have nothing but peace left to talk about." Between the dreams, Lithwick tried to come to grips with her own feelings about what was obviously a psychologically painful situation for her. But she also claimed to capture the mood in Israeli society as a whole: "Trust me when I tell you that everyone—absolutely everyone—is suffering and sad. . . . It's [expletive] sad. Everyone I know is sad."

The piece also attempted to transcend the conflict, studiously avoiding exclusive identification with Israeli suffering. It worried about not just "our friends here who are being called up" but the "innocent children on either side who are being traumatized by growing up in this way" and the "harrowing accounts of burnt-out basements and baby shoes on each side" of the conflict. "I am worried," wrote the author, "about terrified children in Gaza."

Slate's editor tweeted Lithwick's piece as "brilliant." It was praised as compelling reportage by punditsphere inhabitants like Andrew Sullivan. And it took courage for Lithwick to write her article—and to go to Israel, beyond "comfort and Lego," in the first place. The problem is, the article's portrayal of Israel's national mood contradicts everything I know from my experience of having lived through three wars in Israel and the Israeli media's coverage of this one.

I was in Israel during the 2000-2005 Al-Aqsa intifada, when buses and coffee shops were blowing up; the 2006 war in Lebanon, when missiles were falling on Israeli civilians in the north; and the 2008 war in Gaza, when missiles were falling on Israeli civilians in the south. There was deep, inexpressible grief for those who died; but the Israeli public as a whole was in a fighting spirit—defiant, resilient, and determined. Strangers bolstered each other's morale. Every day provided examples of mutual aid. People hosted families of complete strangers for extended periods of time in their homes. We dreamed, thought, and argued—about how we might *win* a war that will probably last a generation.

During the most recent war and its aftermath, I was temporarily in New York City; but in all my conversations with friends and family back in Israel—blue-collar and intellectual, Sephardi and Ashkenazi alike—I have not heard any sadness.

I have also followed the conflict in the Israeli media. Israelis approved or disapproved of the Netanyahu government's handling of the war, with criticism coming from the left and right. But a poll revealed that the military operation in Gaza enjoyed 91% support among the Jewish Israeli public. After the seventh day of combat, demonstrations were organized around the country against a cease-fire and in favor of a sustained ground assault. The Israeli ethos is not characterized by sadness. Israelis are in for the long haul, fighting a just fight.

And on the matter of the suffering on both sides, undifferentiated sympathy in this case reflects not moral strength but moral obtuseness and weakness. If you want to end the suffering, on both sides, you should unequivocally root for Hamas's defeat. Hamas is a virulently anti-Semitic terrorist organization that attacks Israeli civilians on one side of the border as it hides behind Palestinian civilians on the other. Or, as Hamas proudly proclaims, "We love death more than you love life."

The *Slate* article could have come down squarely on the Israeli side of the conflict even while acknowledging the common humanity and suffering of both sides. But it did not do that, and it is no accident—because taking sides means naming an enemy, which Lithwick was constitutionally unprepared to do. "We have nothing but peace left to talk about," she wrote, as if victory can't be discussed. No wonder she feels sadness, a function of the frustrated desire to live without enemies. But it is bizarre to project this sadness onto Israeli society.

The *Slate* article captures, in particularly concentrated form, perhaps the deepest dimension of contemporary liberal Jewish-American "disillusionment" with Israel: Israel is a troubling reminder that we do not live at the end of history. The world is the same as it ever was, divided into friends and enemies.

Need this make us sad? Of course not. Theodor Herzl understood that "the enemy is necessary for the highest effort of the personality;" after all, it was Jew-hatred that originally spurred him into action. As the African-American writer and critic Albert Murray has taught throughout his career, for heroes, dragons are simply opportunities to do their thing. As God or fate would have it, Zionism still demands a heroic Jewish ethos.

Do liberal American Jews possess the intellectual and spiritual resources to identify with this ethos? It remains an open question whether they have the courage to reject the soul-comforting illusion that Jews can live without making enemies. If they choose to hold on to that illusion, a sad future awaits.

Tuesday, December 4

The Turning of the Torah Tide

By Diana Muir Appelbaum

"Torah Judaism today retains more of its youth than at any time since the *Haskalah*." Historian Marc Shapiro made this remark in a recent talk on intellectual trends within 19th-century Orthodoxy. Can he possibly be correct?

In a word, yes.

A generation ago, American Orthodoxy was the province of immigrants and the elderly. Observant Jews simply expected that many, perhaps most, children would leave Shabbat behind when they grew up. When *Fiddler on the Roof* opened on Broadway in 1964, it struck just the right note of nostalgia for a lost world of Sabbaths and Torah—a world to some degree imported to the Lower East Side, where actor Zero Mostel grew up, but one that he had long left behind, as had the Jews in the audience that watched him play Tevye.

Europe was not so different. In Sholem Aleichem's stories, Tevye and his wife Golda watch helplessly as their eldest daughter marries a boy they have not chosen, the next daughter marries a Jewish Marxist, and the third a bookish Christian. The Christian bridegroom was a slight exaggeration; intermarriage was rare. But Jewish girls and boys fell in love with secular ideas and left Orthodoxy behind.

The career of Moses Mendelssohn, a self-taught German-Jewish philosopher born in 1729, marks the beginning of the *Haskalah*, or Jewish Enlightenment. Mendelssohn lived at a time and in a place where Western Europeans had begun to admit Jews to their intellectual and even social circles. By the late 19th century, the *Haskalah* had reached even the backward Russian village where Tevye and Golda lived.

One European state after another granted civil rights to Jews, and new horizons opened. Jews could attend university, enter the professions, and conduct business without legal restrictions. This was not true in the Russian Empire, where the world's largest Jewish community lived in crushing poverty under anti-Semitic legal restrictions; but even the poorest could dream of emigrating to the New World, joining the Zionist movement and rebuilding the ancient Jewish state, or becoming Marxists and turning the world into a worker's paradise. Large numbers of European Jews dreamed even bigger, joining utopian movements that advocated pan-Europeanism, Esperanto as a universal language, pacifism, and the creation of a world in which differences of race and ethnicity ceased to matter.

In this heady atmosphere, only a minority chose Torah. One way to measure the number of Jews falling away from tradition is to see how Jews voted in the pre-World War I Austro-Hungarian Empire and in Europe's inter-war democracies. In one election in which Jewish parties competed, the 1922 vote for the lower house of the Polish Parliament, secular Zionist parties won 19 seats, Mizrachi's religious Zionists five, Agudath Israel six, and other Jewish parties four. But these totals overstate the religious vote, because the Jewish Socialist movement—the Bund—and the smaller but still substantial Jewish Communist movement ran not as Jewish parties but as part of the general Socialist and Communist lists. Yet the Bund was probably the largest Jewish political movement in Poland at that time.

There were many elections, and the combined vote for Agudah, Mizrachi, and smaller religious parties was usually smaller than the Jewish vote for secular Zionists, Socialists and Communists. Before intense inter-war anti-Semitism boosted the popularity of Zionism, large numbers also voted for Jewish parties that were neither religious, Zionist, nor Marxist (including the Folks Party, the Jewish Merchants Party, and the Integrationist Party), and others voted for wholly non-Jewish parties and candidates. Fewer than a quarter of inter-war Jewish voters made Torah enough of a priority to vote for a religious party.

Commitment to Torah can also be measured by the types of schools in which Jews enrolled their children. In late 1930s Poland, around 100,000 children attended religious primary schools affiliated with Agudah and Mizrachi; but more than 400,000 attended secular primary schools. This number includes secular Zionist schools, but the great majority of Jewish children attended Polish public schools. Most of these children's parents had grown up in Sabbath-observant homes, yet more than four out of five were enrolled in secular schools.

In the two centuries that followed Moses Mendelssohn's embrace of the Enlightenment, Torah-oriented parents and communities tried every imaginable approach to producing Torah-oriented youth: isolation from the general culture, combining Torah with secular study, and teaching Jewish subjects to the exclusion of secular subjects. The young continued to leave. In 1917, the Orthodox Agudath Israel approved the small chain of Beis Yaakov schools for girls, founded by Sarah Schenirer in Krakow, out of something close to desperation, after a ruling by a leading scholar of the generation—Rabbi Yisrael Meir Ha-Kohen Kagan, the Hafetz Hayim—deemed the times so extraordinary

that it was permissible to teach Torah to girls. The "tide of heresy is rising vigorously," he judged, and it was necessary to "rescue as many Jewish girls as can be rescued."

European Jews continued to secularize when they immigrated to the United States. Not until 1981 did the Greater New York Jewish Population Study find the first quantitative evidence that the "tide of heresy" might be receding. Among people brought up by Sabbath-observant parents, the survey found, Jews born after 1945 were far more likely to be observant than Jews born before 1945. Among Ashkenazi Jews brought up in Sabbath-observant homes, those who had come of age since 1966 were more likely to continue to keep the Sabbath than at any time since the *Haskalah*.

What changed? Many things changed, of course, but one suspects that the key event was the founding of the State of Israel. Since 1948, American Jews have grown up in a country and a world where Jews and—despite its political troubles—Israel are widely admired and respected, an experience previously enjoyed by no Jewish community for millennia. Jews are no longer scorned as members of a despised race, a people without a land. Hebrew has become a living language spoken by Jews in a successful, modern country. The images of Jews being forced to wear yellow stars, spat upon in the streets, and murdered with no chance to defend themselves have been replaced by images of Israeli soldiers facing down invading armies.

For young Jews coming of age in America after 1966, Jewish tradition has felt like something worth their commitment.

Wednesday, December 5

The Sigd Festival Comes Home to Jerusalem

By Shai Afsai

"Last year," said Orly Sahalo, a 21-year-old Israeli of Ethiopian descent, "I arrived only at the end, and I missed out." She was talking about the Sigd festival, which recently took place in Jerusalem. In Ge'ez, the liturgical language of Ethiopia, "Sigd" means prostration. On the Sigd, Ethiopian Jews, before their mass immigration to Israel, would ascend a mountaintop, pray, read from the Bible, and affirm their desire to return to Jerusalem. Now they are in Jerusalem, and the Sigd has become a national holiday in Israel.

This year, Orly Sahalo was not going to miss out on the full Sigd experience. Encouraged by her boyfriend, the 28-year-old Ethiopian-Israeli photographer Gidon Agaza, she turned up early at the Armon Hanatziv Promenade in Jerusalem, where thousands of Ethiopian Israelis were gathered to celebrate the holiday. "I had goose bumps," she described her reaction. "I saw all the women dressed in white, lifting their hands, and the *qessotch*"—the traditional religious leaders of the Ethiopian Jews—"using their instruments," the drums and trumpets accompanying the prayers, "just as it is written in the Bible."

Indeed, this year Sahalo also attended preliminary educational events before the festival, "so that I could understand the holiday. I wanted to be able to answer questions about the Sigd if people happened to ask me, and to know for myself what was practiced in Ethiopia."

One of those educational events was a talk on the eve of the festival, at Ramat Gan's Bar Ilan University, by Mula Zerihoon, a 40-year old *qes* who was ordained in Israel. The Sigd, he explained, "is based on the times of Ezra and Nehemiah, when, after 70 years in exile, the Jews returned from Babylon to the Land of Israel. In Jerusalem, they held a day of fasting, repentance, teaching of the Torah, and prayer." In Ethiopia, he recalled, "when we climbed the mountain, we felt Jerusalem in our heart of hearts. This deeply impacted our Judaism. Jews came from afar, two or three days, on foot, on horses, and on mules, in order to have the chance to hear Torah from the *qessotch*. The people learned and were strengthened."

Photos courtesy of Moshe Filberg.

The Book of Nehemiah states that after the Jews returned to Jerusalem, "all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the broad place that was before the water gate, and they spoke unto Ezra the Scribe to bring the book of the Torah of Moses, which the Lord had commanded, to Israel." Today, that broad place, Jerusalem's Armon Hanatziv Promenade, overlooks the Temple Mount and offers an unobstructed view of the walls of the Old City. On the day of this year's Sigd, dozens of *qessotch* from across Israel assembled there beneath colorful umbrellas on a platform draped with the flags of Israel and Jerusalem. Chanting in Ge'ez, they praised God and asked for forgiveness and blessings for the Jewish people. They read selections from Nehemiah, Exodus, and Deuteronomy to the congregation, dealing with the giving of the Ten Commandments and the return from exile. They first read in Ge'ez and then translated into Amharic.

Throughout the morning and afternoon, Gidon Agaza snapped pictures of the *qessotch* and worshipers. "I have been at-

Photo courtesy of Moshe Filberg.

Photo courtesy of Irving Schild.

Photo courtesy of Moshe Filberg.

tending the festival for 13 years," he said. "Each and every year that I come, I am moved anew to see mothers praying from the heart. I have a large archive of Sigd celebrations. I need these photographs in order to explain to people the Ethiopian community and its traditions."

At a nearby teaching tent, Shoshana Ben-Dor and Ziva Mekonen-Degu offered instruction in the order and meaning of the day's prayers to some 80 visitors. Most of them were young adults. In collaboration with the *qessotch*, the two women have been preparing a *mahzor*, a prayer book, for the Sigd, in Ge'ez, Amharic, and Hebrew. It is the first of its kind, slated to be published by the time of next year's festival. They hope it will make the holiday accessible to more people.

Ben-Dor believes that all Jews, not just Ethiopian Jews, can benefit from the holiday's celebration. "The Sigd brings together elements that exist in several Jewish holidays in a way that no other Jewish holiday does," she says. "It has aspects of repentance—asking for mercy and hoping that God has forgiven us—that are found in the High Holidays." In addition, she explains, "it has the mourning for Jerusalem found in Tisha B'Av and the return to Zion found in Yom Ha'atzma'ut [Israel's Independence Day]. And it has the covenant and the giving of the Torah, which are found in Shavuot." In sum, she says, the Sigd "is the only day in the entire calendar that brings these all together—and includes an annual renewal of the covenant. Thus, there is an importance in the Sigd for all Jews."

Orly Sahalo was especially impressed by the activities for children and young adults that she saw at Armon Hanatziv. "They will learn," she said, "and this holiday will have a continuation." She was also "moved to see the *qessotch* distributing handfuls of Jerusalem soil to the worshipers. People are able to take a piece of Jerusalem home with them, just as in Ethiopia they were able to take home soil from the mountain on which the Sigd was held."

Thursday, December 6

I've Got Friends in Low-lying Places . . .

By Moshe Sokolow

The recent UN General Assembly vote granting observer nation status to Palestine was 138 in favor, 41 abstentions, and nine opposed. In addition to the United States, along with Canada, Panama, and the Czech Republic, the few nations that supported Israel's opposition to the resolution were Palau, Micronesia, Nauru, and the Marshall Islands. It would be tragic if Israel were to lose the vote of any of its few reliable supporters at the United Nations, but that is just what might happen over the next few years—not due to any political intrigue but on account of global warming! At the moment, the endangered ally is the island republic of Palau, and just this summer PBS aired a report, titled *Paradise Lost*, calling attention to the potential of climate change to inundate and eliminate Palau and its Pacific neighbors.

An archipelago of 300 islands lying in the Philippine Sea north of Australia, with a total area of only 459 square miles (Israel, by comparison, has 21,000 square miles) and a population of only 21,000, Palau more than makes up for its diminutive size with its consistent support of Israel in world forums. Although all of Palau cannot scrape up even a *minyan* (a quorum of 10 Jews), its ambassador to the United Nations since 2004, Stuart Beck, is Jewish, as is Larry Miller, who served for 14 years as an associate justice of Palau's Supreme Court. Somehow, Palau also produced two cyclists who competed in the 2009 Maccabiah Games.

Palauans, grateful for American support in rebuilding the country after the ravages of World War II and in establishing an independent constitutional government, voted

in 1984 to adopt a Compact of Free Association with the United States. They have exercised their vote on behalf of Israel's interests without fail—and without obvious recompense. In a word, they have acted altruistically, as genuine friends.

Nothing in its national profile would mark Palau as an obvious backer of the Jewish state. Nearly 75 percent of its people are Christian, mostly Roman Catholic; an additional 10 percent follow Modekngei, a hybrid of Christianity and the ancient Palauan religion. The island's economic mainstay, apart from subsistence farming and fishing, is tourism; but, in spite of its tropical climate and its world renown as a diving destination, it has never been a port of call for Jewish midwinter cruises or Passover vacations.

Perhaps Palau's unusually high literacy rate of 92 percent contributes to its open-mindedness? Perhaps its geographical isolation frees it from restrictive diplomatic alliances or affiliations? Perhaps its legacy of American largesse inclines it to a more Western and liberal political stance? Perhaps, like other Asian cultures, it shares an affinity for millennia-old traditions?

Or perhaps it is reciprocal? After Palau formally declared its independence in 1994, Israel hastened to afford the new country its first non-Pacific diplomatic recognition.

In January, 2005 a group of students from Yeshiva University High School, organized by then-high school senior Avram Sand, was appreciative enough of Palau's foursquare support of Israel, and curious enough about the motives for its support, to pay a courtesy visit to the island to check it out. They visited with Palauan students at their schools, met with government officials, and kept a most unusual Shabbat—which, on account of halakhic vicissitudes surrounding the International Date Line, was observed on Sunday. "We represented a segment of the Jewish community that was grateful for the support that Palau provides Israel on a regular basis." said Sand. "I was very interested in why these places halfway around the world had any interest in Israel whatsoever."

One of the events the students attended was a 20-minute meeting with the president of Palau, Tommy Remengesau Jr. The stu-

dents thanked him for hosting them and expressed their gratitude for Palau's firm support of Israel in the UN. Shalom Sokolow, another YU High School senior, recited a special prayer for the people of Palau, including a passage from the Book of Isaiah that was chosen to honor Palau's extraordinary attributes:

> Those yonder lift up their voice, they sing for joy;
> For the majesty of the LORD
> they shout from the sea.
> Therefore glorify ye the LORD in the regions of light;
> Even the name of the LORD,
> the God of Israel,
> in the islands of the sea. (29:14-15)

It was reported that the students made quite an impression on their Palauan hosts. Soon after they left, a Palauan high school student named Maungil Leoncio wrote an e-mail to the *Forward* saying, "They're the first Jewish people I met. At first I was judging them by their cover but when I started talking to them, I started to like them a lot. Their presentation was one of the coolest we've had."

For a geographically insular nation, Palau has a record of rather singular broad-mindedness, of which the State of Israel and the Jewish people are currently beneficiaries. Palau supports Israel's existential concerns, and perhaps the time is right to repay the Palauans by supporting one of *their* existential concerns: the gradually increasing erosion of their coastlands, the contamination of their farmlands by seawater, and growing threats to their vital barrier reefs. The Palauans, in a novel and highly controversial legal maneuver, have asked the World Court and the UN Security Council to determine the extent to which all nations share a responsibility to insure that their greenhouse gases do not damage other nations. Israel might well take note.

With the havoc wreaked by Sandy still so fresh in our minds, we should be particularly aware that our interests and the Palauans' coincide. To help them is to help ourselves—and vice versa—in more ways than one.