

pecially motivated to achieve higher test scores in a way the study could not measure."

In conclusion, we, too, look forward to more research on the coaching issue, as well as more understanding of tests and the work conducted here at ETS. We thank *Science* for airing some of the issues.

ROBERT J. SOLOMON
*Educational Testing Service,
Princeton, New Jersey 08541*

Smith inaccurately suggests that the National Consortium on Testing supported testing legislation recently passed in New York. The consortium, a coalition of diverse interests, has *not* taken an official position of advocacy with respect to that or any other legislation. Some consortium members actively supported the New York legislation; some opposed it. As a single entity, the consortium and its research staff have tried to bring responsible analysis to bear on these and other public policy issues concerning testing, but the consortium as a group has taken no public position on these issues.

VITO PERRONE
*National Consortium on Testing,
Post Office Box 9521,
Arlington, Virginia 22209*

The Ebla Tablets

William J. Brôad's article "Syria said to suppress archeological data" (News and Comment, 31 Aug., p. 878) confuses two issues: (i) Are the Syrian authorities improperly attempting to influence scholars to drop the Biblical connections of the Ebla tablets? (ii) If so, are the Syrians having any success in this effort?

The answer to the first question is clearly, yes. For a Syrian government official to request a scholar to make an official disavowal would be unheard of in a free scholarly atmosphere. Such a declaration was requested by the Syrian government and given by Giovanni Pettinato. Moreover, the Syrian government does not hide even now its displeasure at Pettinato's earlier interpretations of the Ebla tablets. As the Syrian ambassador to Washington recently stated in an interview published in *Biblical Archaeology Review*, "Dr. Pettinato tried to give interpretations of the Ebla tablets with a political dimension. This is what we didn't like." When American Biblical archeologists (primarily David Noel Freedman of the University of Michigan and vice president of the American Schools of Oriental Research)

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began talking and writing about the implications of the Ebla tablets for Biblical studies, the Syrians saw behind this a Zionist plot. This is not only paranoid; it announces rather clearly Syria's restrictions on permissible interpretations of the tablets.

The second question—whether the Syrian efforts to influence the interpretation of the tablets has had any effect—is certainly more difficult to answer conclusively. Pettinato's retreat from earlier positions may be, as Broad seems to think, the result of more mature consideration rather than political pressure. On the other hand, it is a bit frightening that Paulo Matthiae, head of the Italian mission to Ebla, agrees that a Zionist plot lies behind the publicity given the Ebla tablets in the Western press. (According to the Syrian magazine *Flash*, Matthiae stated that "These allegations [linking the Ebla tablets with the Bible] were propagated by Zionist-American centres to be exploited for atrocious purposes aimed at proving the expansionist and colonialist views of the Zionist leaders.") Of course, publication delays of scholarly finds are common, and in these circumstances it is difficult to be sure whether publication of the Ebla tablets relating most importantly to the Bible will be delayed for political reasons. But there can be no doubt that Syria has rather clumsily attempted to place its thumb on the scale.

One minor point that may not be so minor. Broad quotes from an unpublished letter written to the *New York Times* by Harvey Weiss of Yale University that refers to the *Biblical Archaeology Review* (incidentally, the name is not *Biblical Archeological Review* as Broad states.) According to *Science*, Weiss wrote the *Times* that *Biblical Archaeology Review* is a "slick new magazine featuring popular, nonscholarly articles, some of them written by the magazine's editor . . ." [emphasis added]. We printed the full text of Weiss's letter in *Biblical Archaeology Review* at the request of the Syrian ambassador in order to assure balanced coverage. In the copy of Weiss's letter furnished us by the Syrian ambassador, Weiss states that *Biblical Archaeology Review* is a "slick new magazine featuring nonscholarly articles mostly written by the magazine's editor . . ." [emphasis added]. This is demonstratively wrong. Some of the world's greatest scholars have published articles in *Biblical Archaeology Review*, including Frank Cross of Harvard; Harry Thomas Frank of Oberlin; Nahum Sarna of Brandeis; Morton Smith of Columbia; Jack Finegan, author of *Archaeology of*

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the New Testament; George Wesley Buchanan of Wesley Theological Seminary; Kurt Weitzmann of Princeton, and Israeli archeologists Yigael Yadin, Yohanan Aharoni, Moshe Kochavi, and Yigal Shiloh, to name just a few.

Incidentally, the American Biblical scholars who aired their views concerning Ebla's implications for Biblical studies on the basis of early information put out by Pettinato may yet have to pay for the sin of scholarly speculation. In another letter, which Weiss provided to the Syrian ambassador, he calls these American Biblical archeologists "irresponsible" scholars who "distorted" the Ebla tablets "for political purposes"; Weiss adds, "Some attempts are being made to remove the irresponsible and self serving persons involved in this from the positions of 'power' which they now hold, but the money behind these persons has considerable clout."

HERSHEL SHANKS

Biblical Archaeology Review,
1737 H Street, NW,
Washington, D.C. 20006

Congratulations on the review of recent press coverage of the discoveries at Ebla. Broad's factual survey renders a most useful service to archeologists who, like myself, have been besieged by indignant inquiries from newspaper readers misled by stories now refuted in such a balanced fashion.

My only regret is that the article's title seems—at first glance—to link your presentation with those of other periodicals maligning the integrity of Syrian scholars and officials who, in actuality, have energetically been encouraging international scientific research.

CARNEY GAVIN

Semitic Museum, Harvard University,
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138

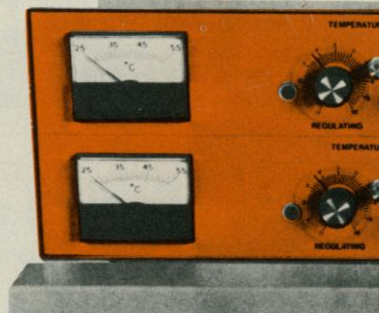
Economy of Expression

Richard Chait's editorial, "College mission statements" (7 Sept., p. 957), was eloquently written and very convincing. It is interesting, however, to observe the effect of changes in the economics of the publishing industry on the length of the message. Chait's essay is essentially a modern statement of an adage coined about 2000 years ago by a Jewish sage, Shammai. The original message (*Avoth* 1:15) was "Say little but do much," only four words in Hebrew.

CHARLES ABZUG

Department of Physiology,
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