

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Sir,

Until now the Book of Ecclesiastes has been very problematic for me. The two part treatise in recent Jewish Bible Quarterly issues, "Ecclesiastes, Fleeting and Timeless", by Etan Dor-Shav is a much appreciated revelation and insight that makes complete sense. Rather than the despairing thoughts of a frustrated old man, in reality and correctly translated the Book of Ecclesiastes is a sermon of appreciation, "following a thematic progression that follows Koheleth's own discovery of meaning."

Thank you very much for including Ethan Dor-Shav's enlightening article.

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Sir,

Leo Abrami in the January 2010 issue of the JBQ seems concerned about positive and negative statements in the Ten Commandments in view of whether they are specific laws or general principles. His assumption is that only the positive form of an exhortation can contain a basic principle while a negative is restricted to a narrow area of action. I beg to differ in both areas.

The belief in God may be perhaps the most general statement of value, yet some authorities found it cogent to derive a positive Mitzvah from this general statement. On the other hand, the command to "observe all the Mitzvot" does not yield a specific Mitzvah. It is not the extent of the general significance that is crucial in determining specific obligations or prohibitions. Positive and negative are also irrelevant when measuring importance. Of course, every positive implies a negative. If one is obligated to do something and he does not do it, he is in violation of the commandment, even though his violation is in the passive mode. On the other hand, every negative implies a prohibition of a negative action, and the violator violates by committing that action.

Thus the Ten Commandments, according to those who count the *Taryag Mitzvot*, contain 14 Mitzvot, not 10. While Commandments 1,3,5,6,7,8,9, and 10, contain only 1 Mitzvah each, the second Commandment, concerning idolatry, contains 4 Mitzvot: not to believe in other gods, not to fashion statues,

