# [***I Smell Pulitzer! (Or Is that Just Sacred Incense?)***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:4K5Y-JTT0-TXDS-4395-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

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From: Larry Yudelson

Subject: Proposal for New Series

The New York Times recently concluded its 10-part series on the Ten Commandments, with a profile of individuals or institutions illustrating their "personal struggles to comply with the directions of ancient laws in the modern world, reject them or simply cope with them." Boffo idea, if you ask me, and real growth potential for a newspaper such as yours. There are, after all, 613 commandments in the Hebrew Bible, leaving open the possibility for almost a dozen years of thumb-sucking human interest stories for an enterprising freelance writer such as myself. By launching the series on, say, Simchat Torah 2003, we can complete it neatly on Shavuot 2015 (or just in time to pay for my youngest's bat mitzvah).

I've taken the liberty of outlining a few of the relevant commandments, and the kinds of articles that could illustrate each one.

No. 1: Be fruitful and multiply. In a world of soaring overpopulation and surging college tuition costs, Rabbi Yechiel Kornfeld, with 11 children, is surprisingly nonplussed. For this spokesman for a major ultra-Orthodox group, the Malthusian issues matter far less than the imperative to prove his brand of Judaism correct through sheer numbers; an ironic neo-Darwinian imperative from a staunch creationist.

No. 110: Don't duplicate the formula of the sacred incense. How does this ancient rule apply today, 2,000 years after God's temple was destroyed? Meet Leo E. Clarke, chief scientist at Generic Labs Inc., torn between the demands of his employers to create a caffeinated cola to be sold under supermarket brands across the country, and the stubborn insistence of the Coca Cola Company to rely on trade secrets, patents and this ancient commandment to keep their formula secret.

No. 94: Don't allow idolaters in the land. We find our compelling human-interest story in the consular staff of the Saudi embassy, trying to balance the divine imperative against allowing infidels in the land of the Prophet, while remaining open enough to the modern world to remain, at least on paper, an ally of the United States.

No. 321: Thou shalt not work on the eighth day of Sukkot: As commander of New York's fleet of street cleaners, the largest in the Western hemisphere, Joseph Reilly takes his public service so seriously that even on weekends he can be found poring over satellite photos with a magnifying glass, looking for the tell-tale signs of litter that indicate a street left less than spotless. But Reilly finds his staunch Catholicism tested on Shemini Atzeret, Simchat Torah and Idr al Fitr, when work - and alternative side of the street parking - are suspended.

No. 169: Thou shalt not allow Levites to inherit part of the land. Itbar al-Yahud is a curious blend of modernity and tradition. Armed with a ***cell phone***, laptop and semi-automatic pistol, al-Yahud is committed to both the principle of 21st-century realty and the ancient laws of God. As head of Re/Max Realtors' Nablus office, he juggles the need to bring in 6% commissions for the Palestinian economy and ensuring that no one possibly descended from the ancient Levite tribe of Israel violates the prohibition of buying land.

No. 244: Thou shall not breed a mixture of animals. Josh Ellenson takes this commandment seriously, though he understands it in his own way. "There is no question that it would be wrong, absolutely wrong, to use recombinant DNA technology to build a new life form, if you were not certain, absolutely certain, that it couldn't return, say, a first-quarter profit of between 21 cents and 23 cents a share on revenue of between $275 million and $290 million," says Ellenson, chief ethical officer for Frank N' Genes Research in Princeton, N.J.

No. 198: Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy mother's sister. Yecch, right? But the story of Jeffrey K. (not his real name) and Selma G. (not her real name) of Skokie, Ill. (not their real town or state), offers a tasteful insight into this most ancient of proscriptions.

No. 200: Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy father's brother's wife. It will take some legwork to illustrate this one, but Jeffrey K. tells me he might have some leads.

No. 502: If you are a king, thou shalt not bring yourself excess profit. Anything can happen between now and 2010, but let's just plan on a headline along the lines of "Something Something Something Dick Cheney."

This list only hints at the possibilities. The animal rights crowd is going to love No. 51, "The court must judge the damages incurred by a goring ox," and I'm already lining up labor lawyers to comment on No. 347, "Canaanite slaves must work forever unless injured in one of their limbs."

I look forward to your response. If you pass, Kosher Today said they might be interested.

Larry Yudelson lives in Teaneck, N.J., where he has been known to keep as many as 10 commandments in a single weekend.

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