

**Proper 22**  
**Cycle A RCL**  
**Revised**

**Exodus 20:1-4, 7-9, 12-20**

The “ten words,” what we call the Ten Commandments, also occur in Deuteronomy 5:6-21. Each commandment is what Albrecht Alt dubbed “apodictic law,” the absolute law of the desert sheik. Apodictic law differs entirely from the if/then legal formulations Alt called “casuistic law,” case law, law typical of the great codes of Mesopotamia such as that of Hammurabi. Apodictic law states a prohibition without a consequence or penalty, and there are no circumstantial nuances to them. The unadorned commandments in Exodus 20:3, 13-16 represent the most fundamental form of the ancient commandments, and the rationales or explanations we find in verses 4-12, 17 are later than the original apodictic formulas.. The Decalogue stands at the beginning of the Bible’s first law code, the Covenant Code, in Exodus 21-23, a code that consists of both apodictic and casuistic elements.

**Psalm 19**

This psalm is made up of portions of two different psalms. Psalm 19:1-6 is a fragment of a *hymn of praise* that probably comes from the Temple rituals of Jerusalem before the Exile in 586 BCE. Psalm 19:7-14, on the other hand, is from a *wisdom psalm*. Wisdom psalms were not designed for use in Temple worship but for the instruction of students in the court schools. The “law of the Lord” (*torat adonay*) is not law as we might think of it but “instruction” such as a teacher might deliver to a student.

OR

**Isaiah 5:1-7**

This poem may be based on a familiar love song that used the popular figure of a (female) lover as a choice vineyard. (See Song of Songs 1:6, 14, *etc.*) The male lover (the God of Israel) is the prophet’s “dear friend” (*dodi*, verse 1), and the crop this friend planted was the choicest of Palestinian grapes (*soreq*, verse 2, grapes native to the Soreq Valley) in a fertile location protected from poachers by a watchtower and wall. The image is of the terrace farming common to the mountains of Palestine and still practiced today. The last part of the last verse employs two word plays. God expected “justice” (*mishpat*) but received “bloodshed” (*mispah*), “righteousness” (*cedaqah*) but received instead a “loud cry” (*ce<sup>c</sup>aqah*) .

**Psalm 80:7-14**

This is a *community lament* that makes reference to the northern tribes of Israel (verse 2), even though the reference to God sitting enthroned upon the *cherubim* (heavenly winged sphinxes, the image of which form the “mercy seat” of God on the portable throne of God called the “Ark Of the Covenant”) puts the psalm squarely in the context of the Jerusalem cult. Some have suggested that the psalm laments the conquest of the northern state by Sargon II of Assyria in 722/721 BCE.

**Philippians 3:4b-14**

Paul reserved some of his most strident language to express the contempt in which he held this present age. He regards all things as *skubala* (a Greek word for human refuse) in comparison with the value of knowing Christ (3:8). The sudden shift from praise of Epaphroditus (2:25-3:1) to warning about the “dogs” (3:2), who are the Philippians’ enemies, has suggested to some interpreters that our epistle contains more than one letter from Paul and, indeed, that Philippians is a composite of several letters.

**Matthew 21:33-46**

The author of the First Gospel believed that the “New Israel,” the church, supplanted the “Old Israel” which, like the tenants in the parable, rejected the command of their lord and went so far as to kill the lord’s son to usurp the son’s inheritance for themselves. Many believe that this kind of harsh teaching reflects a late first-century dispute within Christianity among various factions of Jewish Christians. The Gospel of Matthew portrays Jesus as the champion of a kind of Christian Pharisaism based upon the strict Pharisaism of Shammai as opposed to the gentler Pharisaism of Hillel that eventually became Judaism, as we know it.

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