

DEUTERONOMY

= Covenant Renewal Document

structure of the book: Hittite Suzerainty Treaty

- **Definition of Suzerain** → 1) A nation that controls another nation in international affairs, but allows it domestic sovereignty 2) A feudal lord to whom fealty (faithfulness) was owed **cf. vassal** (the weaker nation)

>>> Suzerain protects vassal, vassal remains loyal and faithful to the suzerain.

- **Definition of Covenant** → an agreement between 2 people/groups that involves promises on the part of each to the other.

Background to forming this treaty:

2 super powers, in 1300's, Egypt and Hatti (Hittite nation) struggled for control of the eastern Mediterranean for 100 years → inconclusive battle → drained resources → 1280 B.C. treaty was negotiated

It was motivated by both Egypt's and Hatti's need for economic recovery, and internal stability and security against the increasing military threat of the Sea Peoples.

>>> In this case, God is the suzerain and Israel is the vassal.

The structure of Deuteronomy is the shape of such Near Eastern treaty which listed the obligations laid on the vassal by the suzerain.

format of agreements between the suzerain and vassal nation = stipulation which cover the obligations and prohibitions of the vassal nation

>>> But in case of the Israelites, Israel's obligations were connected to sustaining the relationship outlined in the covenant. They were to behave with conducts becoming of God's people. The Israelites were to keep the law not because it was the law but because it reflected the nature of God and of what He wanted them to be like in order to remain in relationship with Him.

Deuteronomy is framing these laws not as legislation but as covenant. When people of the ancient Near East agreed to a treaty and its stipulations, they were obliged to abide by the terms of the treaty. Though it is the same level of obligation that would be connected to the laws of the land, but it operates differently, not within a legal system.

Ex.) Law within nation vs. international treaty-type agreements

Moses: mediator of the covenant; as God's messenger or envoy He is establishing the terms of the treaty. The vassal would have been reminded that it was a privilege to be brought into this agreement and that it would be prudent to refrain from any action that would jeopardize those privileges

Standard Hittite treaties contained at least 6 components:

- 1) credentials of the signatories/ preamble where the king is introduced
- 2) historical prologue in which the past history between the 2 parties are reviewed/ the new and official history of the partners
- 3) terms/stipulations: general and specific ones
- 4) ratification: litany of curses for treaty violations and blessings for treaty compliance
- 5) witnesses – gods who will guarantee the treaty

Comparing Deuteronomy to the Hittite/Egyptian Treaty of 1280 BC

Title: 1:1-5

“These are the words that Moses spoke...”

Treaty Credentials

Inscribed on this silver tablet is the treaty creating peace and eternal alliance between Hattusilis, the great king of Hatti, son of Mursilis, a great king of Hatti, grandson of Suppiluliumas, a great king of Hatti, and Ramses, the pharaoh of Egypt, son of Seti, a pharaoh of Egypt, son of Ramses, a Pharaoh of Egypt.

Historical prologue: 1:6-4:49

“The wilderness, defeating Og and Sidon.. etc.”

History (leading up to the treaty)

In the beginning, the divine assembly decreed that there be peace between the pharaoh of Egypt and the great king of Hatti. Then Mutwatallis, my brother and great king of Hatti, declared war on Ramses. From this day forward, Hattusilis will observe the decree of Ra and Seth, which prohibits war between Egypt and Hatti forever.

Stipulations (Terms) Chp. 5- 26:19

“today the Lord has obtained your agreement: to be His treasured people (26:18)

when you go to war...you shall not be afraid for the Lord is with you..(20:1)
“Slaves who escaped to you...(23:15)”

Stipulations

.....I Ramses agree to peace and an alliance...

...If a foreign army invades the lands of Ramses and he sends a message to the great king of Hatti, saying, "Come and help....." The great King of Hatti shall come and fight.....

....any runaway slave, who escapes to Hatti in search of a new master, shall be extradited to Ramses.....Likewise any runaway slave who escapes to Egypt shall be extradited to the great king of Hatti.....

Curses and Blessings:

“Cursed be anyone who does not uphold the words of this law by observing all of them.”
All the people shall say, “Amen!”
Dt. 27:26

Curses and Blessings

Cursed by the divine assembly of Hatti and Egypt be the homes and lands and slaves of those who do not observe the treaty between Hatti and Egypt inscribed on this silver tablet.

Blessed by the divine assembly of Hatti and Egypt with prosperity and long life be the homes and lands and slaves of those Egyptians and Hittites who observe and carry out faithfully the treaty between Hatti and Egypt inscribed on this silver tablet...

TOP 2 LEVELS OF STRUCTURE

Historical Prologue Chp. 1 - 4:49		Covenant Stipulations or Conditions Chp. 5 - 26:19		Ratification of Covenant Chp. 27 - end	
Old Generation 1 -2:15	New Generation	Basic Commands 5:1-11:32	Specific Laws 12:1-26:19	Conditions of Blessing/Curse 27:1-30:20	Moses' Song, Blessing