

INTRODUCTION TO THE TORAH NUGGET FOR THE PORTION DEVARIM ON THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST CONTEXT.

"If, however, from there you start searching once more for Yahweh your God, and if you search for him honestly and sincerely, you will find him. You will suffer; everything I have said will befall you, but in the Final Days you will return to Yahweh your God and listen to his voice. For Yahweh your God is a merciful God and will not desert or destroy you or forget the covenant which he made on oath with your ancestors."
Deuteronomy 4:29-31

Did you know that the book of Deuteronomy was written in the structure of the Ancient near Eastern Treaty format and is considered by scholars as a Covenantal Renewal Structured found in the Ancient Documents.

These are the steps of Ancient Covenants:

From the cumulative evidence provided by archaeology we have learned that the majority of these covenants follow a particular pattern. Mendenhall describes the pattern as follows:

- a. The preamble. The treaty text frequently opens with the statements: "These are the words of..." followed by the identification of the king who gives the treaty, his titles, appellatives, and genealogy. The treaty is thus a message from the suzerain to the vassal.

TREATY BETWEEN
HATTUSILIS AND RAMSES II

Preamble

These are the words of Rea-mashesha mai Amana, the great king of the land of Egypt, the valiant of all lands, the son (5) of Min-mua-rea, the great king, the king of the land of Egypt, the valiant, the grandson of Min-pakhta-rea,³ the great king, the king of the land of Egypt, the valiant, (spoken) to Hattusilis, the great king, the king of the Hatti land, the valiant, the son of Mursilis, the great king, the king of the Hatti land, the valiant, the grandson of Suppiluliumas, the great king, the king of the Hatti land, the valiant.¹

How did John opens the gospel of John about Yeshua the messenger of the Covenant?

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.² He was in the beginning with God.²

1 In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth,² the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.³ Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light.⁴ And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.⁵ God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.³

TREATY BETWEEN MURSILIS
AND DUPPI-TESSUB OF AMURRU

Texts: Akkadian version: *KUB*, III, 14. Hittite version: *KBo*, v, 9; *KUB*, III, 119; *KUB*, XIV, 5; *KUB*, XIX, 48; *KUB*, XXI, 49. Literature: J. Friedrich, *Staatsverträge des Hatti-Reiches in hethitischer Sprache (MV AG, XXXI/I, 1926)*, 1–48. E. F. Weidner, *Politische Dokumente aus Kleinasien (Boghazköi Studien, VIII, 1923)*, 76–79.

Preamble

1. These are the words of the Sun Mursilis, the great king, the king of the Hatti land, the valiant, the favorite of the Storm-god, the son of Suppiluliumas, the great king, the king of the Hatti land, the valiant.

¹ Pritchard, J. B. (Ed.). (1969). *The ancient Near East an anthology of texts and pictures* (3rd ed. with Supplement., p. 202). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

² *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. (1989). (Jn 1:1–2). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

³ *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. (1989). (Ge 1:1–5). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

Historical Introduction

2. Aziras was the grandfather of you, Duppi-Tessub. He rebelled against my father, but submitted again to my father. When the kings of Nuhasse land³ and the kings of Kinza rebelled against my father, Aziras did not rebel. As he was bound by treaty, he remained bound by treaty. As my father fought against his enemies, in the same manner fought Aziras. Aziras remained loyal toward my father [as his overlord] and did not incite my father's anger. My father was loyal toward Aziras and his country; he did not undertake any unjust action against him or incite his or his country's anger in any way. 300 (shekels of) refined and first-class gold, the tribute which my father had imposed upon your father, he brought year for year; he never refused it.

3. When my father became god and I seated myself on the throne of my father, Aziras behaved toward me just as he had behaved toward my father. It happened that the Nuhasse kings and the king of Kinza rebelled a second time against me. But Aziras, your grandfather, and DU-Tessub, your father, [did not take their side]; they remained loyal to me as their lord. [When he grew too old] and could no longer go to war and fight, DU-Tessub fought against the enemy with the foot soldiers and the charioteers of the Amurru land just as he had fought with foot soldiers and charioteers against the enemy. And the Sun destroyed them.

(gap in which the reign of DU-Tessub was dealt with)

6*. (DU-Tessub recommends his son as his successor:) “[... When I die, accept my son] Duppi-Tessub as your vassal.”

7*. When your father died, in accordance with your father's word I did not drop you. Since your father had mentioned to me your name *with great praise*, I sought after you. To be sure, you were sick and ailing, but although you were ailing, I, the Sun, put you in the place of your father and took your brothers (and) sisters and the Amurru land in oath for you.⁴

b. The historical prologue. This consists of a description of the previous relationship between the two parties, frequently in the “I-Thou” form of address, emphasizing particularly the acts of benevolence which the suzerain has performed for the good of the vassal... These preceding acts of the suzerain are evidently regarded as the foundation of the vassal's obligation, and therefore the historical prologue seems to be carefully composed.

c. The stipulations. This section contains the obligations to which the

⁴ Pritchard, J. B. (Ed.). (1969). *The ancient Near East an anthology of texts and pictures* (3rd ed. with Supplement., pp. 203–204). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

vassal binds himself in accepting the covenant defined by the suzerain. The context varies widely, but military obligations are, as expected, treated in detail. First, the vassal must not enter into alliance with other independent kings, and he must be a friend to the suzerain's friends and an enemy to his enemies. The vassal must answer any summons for military forces, and engage wholeheartedly in any military campaign commanded by the suzerain. Second, regulations for the treatment of refugees are so frequent that it is necessary to conclude that this was an important issue during this period. Third, war booty is often regulated in advance; this also was evidently a fertile source of discord...Most interesting is the frequent prohibition of "murmuring," the utterance of "unfriendly words," against the suzerain, and the obligation to report such words uttered by others. With this is often combined an exhortation to trust the suzerain, even in spite of appearances to the contrary. Finally, a stipulated tribute is imposed.

d. The deposit and public reading. Typically there is a provision for the deposit of the treaty document in the sanctuary of the vassal, and a requirement that it be read in public at stipulated intervals, from one to four times a year.

e. The list of witnesses. Ancient legal documents normally ended with a list of witnesses, and the international treaties are no exception. Here, however, the gods of both states are named—in fact, some of the lists seem to attempt exhaustiveness in making all known gods of the cultural area witnesses to the covenant. In addition, however, important features of the natural world are included, such as mountains, rivers, springs, the great sea, heaven and earth, winds and clouds. It seems reasonably certain that the gods as witnesses were expected to punish breach of contract, and thus religious awe was appealed to as a ground for future obedience...

f. The blessings and curses. This consists of a list of goods and calamities, which the divine witnesses were called upon to bring upon the vassal for obedience and disobedience respectively. The curses usually precede and consist of the misfortunes usually attributed to the wrath of the gods in antiquity: destruction, sterility, misery,

poverty, plague, famine. The blessings, conversely, are divine protection, continuity of the vassal's line, health, prosperity, and peace.

- a. The preamble Deuteronomy 1:1-5
- b. The historical prologue Deuteronomy 1:6-10:11
- c. The stipulations Deuteronomy 10:12-26:19
- d. The deposit and public reading Deuteronomy 27:1-9; 31:9-13, 24-26
- e. The list of witnesses Deuteronomy 31:28; 32:1
- f. The blessings and curses Deuteronomy 28:1-29:1

The book of Deuteronomy clearly contains many of the same attributes as the typical Ancient Near Eastern suzerain-vassal covenant treaty.

Did you know that the verses in Deuteronomy 4:1-2 uses the legal language used in the Ancient Near Eastern treaties. Thus, making the book of Deuteronomy a legal binding Covenant Renewal.

So, Compare the verses in the book of Revelation which uses the same legal language, thus making the book of Revelation a legal text.

Revelation 22:18 I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this book; 19 if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away that

person's share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version. (1989).

(Re 22:18–19). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

Deuteronomy 12: 32 (In Hebrew text is 13:1) You must diligently observe everything that I command you; do not add to it or take anything from it.

The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version. (1989). (Dt 12:32). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers. The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version. (1989). (Dt 13). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

The Language of the Ancient Near Eastern Covenant is found in the Book of Deuteronomy.

Do not add ... do not subtract (4:2). This “canonical formula” (cf. 13:1–3) is common to ancient Near Eastern treaty literature. It is found essentially in Egyptian scribal guidelines and in Assyria (Esarhaddon) as warnings against changing any part of a covenant/treaty. Hammurabi included this charge in his epilogue¹⁹⁵ and called down curses on anyone who would change his laws. The same language obtains in the prologue/epilogue of the Lipit-Ishtar law code.

Walton, J. H. (2009). Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary (Old Testament): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy (Vol. 1, p. 442). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

COVENANT TREATY LAWSUITS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

In the ancient Near East when a vassal kingdom violated the terms of the covenant agreement, the Great Lord would send emissaries to warn the offenders of the coming judgment and enforcement of the curse sanctions. If the covenant relationship could not be reestablished and the violations continued the great king's emissaries would call a "covenant lawsuit" against the offending vassal. In the Bible it was the mission of God's holy Prophets (who acted as God's emissaries) to bring a restoration of covenant obligations or, when failing in restoration, to act as Yahweh's prosecuting attorneys to bring the message of the covenant Lawsuit against the offending nation. In Hebrew a covenant lawsuit is called a 'rib' or riv. For example: Isaiah and Hosea brought a Covenant Lawsuit against the Northern Kingdom Israel in the 8th century BC. The prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel brought a Covenant Lawsuit against the Southern Kingdom of Judea in the 6th century BC. In every case the holy prophet acting as Yahweh's emissary addressed the generation on which the Covenant curses would fall. Some examples of covenant lawsuits in Scripture are found in:

1. Deuteronomy 4:26; 30:19; 32:1
2. Psalms 50:4-7
3. the Book of Isaiah 1:2 & 21
4. the Book of Hosea 4:1 "*Israelites, hear what Yahweh says, for Yahweh indicts (literally brings a 'riv', covenant lawsuit to) the citizens of the country: there is no loyalty, no faithful love, no knowledge of God in the country...*"