

Dr. Robert Vannoy, Deuteronomy, Session 5B, Kline-Deuteronomy as Covenant Renewal Ceremony Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide Quiz, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Vannoy, Deuteronomy, Session 5B, Kline-Deuteronomy as Covenant Renewal Ceremony, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture excerpt discusses Robert Vannoy's presentation on Meredith Kline's theory that the Book of Deuteronomy is a covenant renewal document structured like a suzerainty treaty from the ancient Near East. Vannoy explains Kline's structural analysis of Deuteronomy, comparing it to the Hittite treaty form and addressing the "two introductions" problem. He contrasts Kline's approach with that of Gerhard von Rad, highlighting similarities and differences in their interpretations of Deuteronomy's structure and origins. The lecture also explores the debate surrounding the historical implications of the "covenant form" in the Old Testament and cautions against solely relying on extra-biblical sources for interpretation. Finally, the lecture examines the concept of "love" in Deuteronomy within the context of the suzerainty treaty.

2. 16 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Vannoy, Deuteronomy, Session 5B – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Pentateuch → Deuteronomy).



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on05B.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Vannoy, Deuteronomy, Session 5B, Kline-Deuteronomy as Covenant Renewal Ceremony

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from the provided excerpts of Robert Vannoy's lecture on Deuteronomy, focusing on Meredith Kline's thesis and its implications.

Briefing Document: Vannoy on Kline's Interpretation of Deuteronomy

I. Core Thesis: Deuteronomy as a Covenant Renewal Document Structured like a Suzerainty Treaty

- **Kline's Central Argument:** The book of Deuteronomy is not merely a collection of addresses, but a structured covenant renewal document. This structure mirrors the legal form of ancient Near Eastern **suzerainty treaties**, specifically those of the Hittite empire (c. 1400-1200 BC). These treaties involved a "great king" (suzerain) and a subordinate state (vassal).
- Vannoy states, "Kline's thesis is that Deuteronomy is a covenant renewal document that is structured according to the legal structure of the suzerainty treaties of the Mosaic age."
- **Suzerainty Treaty Structure:** Vannoy outlines the standard structure of these treaties:
- **Preamble/Title:** Introduces the great king.
- **Historical Prologue:** Recounts the history of the relationship between the suzerain and vassal, emphasizing the suzerain's beneficent acts.
- **Stipulations:** The obligations and duties of the vassal. These are divided into:
 - **Basic Stipulations:** General, broad statements of obligation.
 - **Detailed Stipulations:** Specific rules and responsibilities.
- **Curses and Blessings:** Consequences for obedience or disobedience to the treaty.
- **Covenant Ratification:** Formal acceptance of the covenant.
- **Succession Arrangement:** Provisions for the continuation of the treaty and the associated relationship after the suzerain's death.
- **Deuteronomy's Parallel Structure:** Kline argues that Deuteronomy follows this same structure:

- **Preamble:** 1:1-5
- **Historical Prologue:** 1:6-4:29
- **Stipulations:** 5-26
- **Curses and Blessings, Covenant Ratification:** 27-30
- **Succession Arrangement of the terms of loyalty:** 31-34

II. Deuteronomy as a "Libretto" of a Covenant Renewal Ceremony

- **Addresses and Ceremony:** Kline views Deuteronomy as the written record of a covenant renewal ceremony in the plains of Moab, with Moses acting as the representative of God (the great king). The book's content represents the spoken words of this ceremony, the "libretto."
- Vannoy quotes Kline: "To analyze Deuteronomy in terms of a documentary pattern is not incompatible with the obvious facts that the book in its own representation consists almost entirely as a series of addresses."
- **Oral and Written:** The covenant would have been read aloud to the people (oral) and also recorded in a document (written). This parallels the Hittite treaty practices, where the great king would have the document read to the vassal people.
- **Renewal and Transition:** The covenant renewal at Moab is crucial because:
 - It is a new situation: the Israelites are about to enter the Promised Land.
 - Moses's impending death requires a succession arrangement.
 - The covenant is updated and renewed during times of leadership transition, just as with suzerainty treaties.

III. The Sinai Covenant and Deuteronomy's Relationship

- **Document Behind Deuteronomy?** A student asks about any prior documents behind Deuteronomy. Vannoy explains that the covenant initially established at Sinai, outlined in Exodus 19 and 24, does have elements of a treaty relationship. However, these elements are clearer in Deuteronomy's structure due to the renewal ceremony that took place in Moab.

- **Form, Not Copying:** Vannoy stresses that Moses did not slavishly copy a Hittite treaty, but utilized a familiar form (a covenant form) when God established the relationship with Israel. He states, "In all this you don't have any slavish copying of some Hittite treaty by Moses, but you have a pattern, or a form, that was familiar to the people in the world of that time." The structure, he contends, was familiar from the ancient world and reflects common practices in establishing relationships, even if the content was unique to Israel's covenant.
- **Covenant Form Within the Old Testament:** The elements of a covenant form are found throughout the Old Testament (preamble, historical prologue, stipulations, etc.), even without knowledge of Hittite treaties. This covenant form suggests the form itself is important in understanding these texts.

IV. Kline vs. Von Rad: Divergent Views on Origin

- **Shared Idea of Ceremonial Background:** Both Kline and Gerhard von Rad recognize a ceremonial background to the structure of Deuteronomy, suggesting the book reflects a specific ritual or ceremony.
- **Key Difference: Date and Authorship:** **Von Rad:** Hypothesizes that Deuteronomy's structure comes from a periodic covenant renewal ceremony at Shechem during a later time period and he does not believe it was authored by Moses. He proposes a "cultic setting" as the origin of the form, but later related his view to Hittite treaty structures.
- **Kline:** Sees the origin of the form in the Mosaic covenant at Sinai and its renewal in Moab. This aligns with the book's claim of Mosaic authorship and the historical context, and is much earlier than von Rad's suggested later date.
- **Vannoy's Support for Kline:** Vannoy leans toward Kline's thesis, arguing that it better supports the integrity of Deuteronomy and its link to Moses. He implies that a bias against American scholarship might be a factor in the resistance to Kline's work in some academic circles.

V. Deuteronomy and the Language of Ancient Treaties

- **Opening Formula:** Deuteronomy's opening, "These are the words of..." directly parallels the opening language found in ancient suzerainty treaties.
- Vannoy quotes Kline: "Deuteronomy begins precisely as the ancient treaties began, 'These are the words of.' That is the expression the treaties open with."

- **Moses as Representative:** Moses acts as God's representative. The need for a covenant renewal was due to a change of leadership (Moses's death), mirroring the need to renew treaties when a new ruler came into power.
- **Emphasis on Covenant:** The stipulations (chapters 5-26) are not just rules, but also instructions for living within the covenant relationship. They are an expression of the vassal's response to the suzerain's grace and kindness.
- **Love as Obedience:** The concept of "love" for God in Deuteronomy is closely tied to obedience to the covenant stipulations. This aligns with the way love is used in treaty texts, where love is synonymous with loyalty and service to the suzerain.
- Vannoy cites multiple articles showing “the love of God is the peculiar stress of Deuteronomy, and it is still more remarkable the book conserves some of the old covenantal ideas.”
- He also highlights that, “In Esarhaddon’s treaty love is commanded as a duty toward the suzerain: “You will love Ashurbanipal as yourself.”
- **Extra-Biblical Material:** While not controlling the interpretation of biblical texts, extra-biblical material like treaty texts help to illuminate the meaning and connotations of concepts found in Deuteronomy.

VI. The Covenant Form and Its Historical Implications

- **Wide Recognition, Differing Interpretations:** There is widespread agreement on the presence and importance of a covenant form in the Old Testament, but no consensus on its origin and historical implications. This form is found at Sinai, in Deuteronomy, and in Joshua 24.
- **Resistance to Historical Conclusions:** Some scholars like Claus Baltzer and D.J. McCarthy acknowledge the covenant form but resist drawing historical conclusions from it, fearing that it is methodologically dangerous.
- Vannoy cites Baltzer who says, “He’s more interested in historical questions than the present work which limits itself to the form critical approach. No doubt further conclusions in the historical sphere can be drawn on the basis of this form, but I consider it methodologically dangerous to bring both sets of questions together prematurely.”

- **Vannoy's View:** Vannoy counters this view, arguing that if a literary form exists, it suggests a corresponding historical setting. While caution is needed, seeking to understand the origin of the covenant form is a valid and essential pursuit. He thinks that the question of when and how this form came into Israel is fundamental, as it is a major influence across the history of the nation.

VII. Key Questions for Further Discussion:

- Is the covenant form cultic or prophetic in its origin? Vannoy intends to explore this later.
- What is the best explanation for the adoption of the covenant form in Israel?
- Can a reliable historical setting for the covenant form be established, given the literary form in the text?

Conclusion: This document has laid out the basis of Kline's argument, that Deuteronomy is a covenant renewal document modeled after the form of ancient Near Eastern suzerainty treaties. Vannoy's lecture provides a framework for interpreting Deuteronomy within the broader context of the ancient world and its legal structures, using both biblical texts and extra-biblical material. He also contrasts Kline's view to Von Rad's, emphasizing the different conclusions both come to when studying the historical context behind Deuteronomy. Finally, Vannoy also highlights the importance of studying the historical setting behind literary forms such as the covenant form.

4. Study Guide: Vannoy, Deuteronomy, Session 5B, Kline-Deuteronomy as Covenant Renewal Ceremony

Deuteronomy Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What is the central argument of Kline's thesis regarding the book of Deuteronomy?
2. Describe the structure of a suzerainty treaty and how it relates to Deuteronomy.
3. According to Kline, how should we understand the series of addresses by Moses in Deuteronomy in light of the book's structure?
4. What does Vannoy say is the relationship between the covenant at Sinai and the covenant renewal in Deuteronomy?
5. How does Vannoy differentiate between Kline's and von Rad's understanding of the structure of Deuteronomy?
6. What does Vannoy say is significant about the phrase, "These are the words of..." in relation to Deuteronomy?
7. How does Kline's approach resolve the problem of the "two introductions" in Deuteronomy?
8. Explain the difference between the stipulations in Deuteronomy 5-11 and 12-26, according to Kline.
9. How is the concept of "love" (ahav) presented in Deuteronomy, and how does it relate to the idea of obedience?
10. What is meant by the term "Sitz im Leben," and why is it important when considering the covenant form of Deuteronomy?

Quiz Answer Key

1. Kline's thesis argues that Deuteronomy is a covenant renewal document structured according to the legal form of the suzerainty treaties of the Mosaic age, reflecting a formal relationship between a great king and a vassal. This suggests that the form of the text is based on that of a political treaty.

2. A suzerainty treaty is an agreement between a great king (suzerain) and a subordinate state (vassal), typically containing a preamble, historical prologue, stipulations, curses and blessings, and succession arrangements, and these are also found in Deuteronomy. The structure of Deuteronomy parallels this form.
3. Kline argues that the series of addresses by Moses in Deuteronomy are not incompatible with the book's treaty structure. He proposes that the addresses represent the ceremonial words of Moses during a covenant renewal ceremony, making Deuteronomy the libretto of the covenant ceremony.
4. Vannoy explains that the covenant was initially established at Sinai, but it becomes much clearer in Deuteronomy at the covenant renewal where the elements of the covenant form are more apparent. The covenant renewal in Deuteronomy updates the Sinai covenant in a new situation before entering Canaan.
5. Vannoy notes that while both see a ceremonial background to Deuteronomy's structure, von Rad proposes a later cultic setting in the Northern Kingdom, while Kline links the structure to the Mosaic covenant at Sinai and its renewal in the plains of Moab, connecting it directly to Moses' time.
6. Vannoy explains that the phrase "These are the words of..." which opens Deuteronomy mirrors the opening of ancient suzerainty treaties. This phrase highlights Moses' role as God's representative and the theocratic nature of the covenant.
7. Kline argues that the two introductions in Deuteronomy are actually a preamble (1:1-5) and an historical prologue (1:6-4:49) respectively. These two parts are always found together in a suzerainty treaty, thus resolving the issue of a dual introduction and reinforcing the idea of a coherent structure.
8. According to Kline, the stipulations in Deuteronomy 5-11 present the primary demands of the Lord in general terms while 12-26 contains more specific requirements. These chapters together declare the suzerain's demands, but with differing levels of detail.
9. In Deuteronomy, love (ahav) is presented as a duty and is synonymous with obedience to God. It is not merely an emotional feeling, but the way a vassal is to regard the suzerain, demonstrated in acts of service and worship and this relates to the stipulations.

10. "Sitz im Leben" refers to the "situation in life" or the historical and social setting in which a literary form originated. Understanding the "Sitz im Leben" of the covenant form in Deuteronomy is important for determining its origin, the reason for its adoption in Israel, and the implications for the meaning of the text.

Essay Questions

Instructions: Answer each question in essay format. Be sure to support your arguments with evidence from the source material.

1. Discuss the significance of Kline's thesis on the book of Deuteronomy as a covenant renewal document structured according to the suzerainty treaty form. How does this perspective impact our understanding of the book's purpose and message?
2. Compare and contrast Kline's and von Rad's perspectives on the structure of Deuteronomy. What are the key differences in their understanding of the book's origins and implications?
3. How does the concept of "love" (ahav) in Deuteronomy as presented by Vannoy, challenge traditional notions of love? What does this understanding tell us about the covenant relationship between God and Israel?
4. Evaluate the various arguments for and against using the form critical method to draw historical conclusions about the origin of the covenant form found in Deuteronomy. What are the strengths and weaknesses of this approach, according to Vannoy?
5. Analyze the implications of the "Sitz im Leben" concept in the context of Deuteronomy's covenant form. How does considering the historical setting of the form influence your interpretation of the book?

Glossary

Covenant: A formal agreement or treaty, in the context of the text, it often refers to the relationship between God and Israel.

Covenant Renewal Document: A document (like Deuteronomy, according to Kline) that is written or spoken to reinstate or affirm the terms of a previously established covenant.

Cultic: Relating to religious practices and ceremonies, particularly those involving ritual and worship.

Form Critical Approach: A method of biblical study that analyzes the literary forms and genres in the text to understand their purpose and origins.

Historical Prologue: A section within a treaty or covenant document that recounts the history of the relationship between the involved parties.

Libretto: The text of an opera or other dramatic musical work. Here it refers to the text of the covenant ceremony.

Parity Treaty: A treaty between equal parties or powers.

Preamble: An introduction or preface to a document; the first section of the treaty form which identifies the one making the treaty.

Sitz im Leben: A German term meaning "situation in life," referring to the historical and social context in which a particular text or form originated.

Stipulations: The specific obligations, responsibilities, or demands outlined in a covenant or treaty.

Suzerain: The superior party in a treaty or agreement; a great king.

Suzerainty Treaty: A treaty between a great king (suzerain) and a subordinate state (vassal).

Theocratic: Relating to or denoting a system of government in which priests rule in the name of God.

Vassal: The subordinate party in a treaty or agreement; a smaller state.

5. FAQs on Vannoy, Deuteronomy, Session 5B, Kline-Deuteronomy as Covenant Renewal Ceremony, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ: Deuteronomy and the Suzerainty Treaty Structure

- **What is the main idea behind Kline's thesis regarding the book of Deuteronomy?** Kline's thesis proposes that Deuteronomy is a covenant renewal document that closely follows the structure of ancient suzerainty treaties. These treaties were agreements between a great king (suzerain) and a subordinate state (vassal). According to Kline, Deuteronomy, in its structure, mirrors the key components of these treaties such as preamble, historical prologue, stipulations, blessings and curses, covenant ratification and succession arrangements, implying it is a formal covenant renewal using a familiar pattern from that time.
- **What are the key components of a suzerainty treaty, and how do they correspond to the structure of Deuteronomy?** A suzerainty treaty typically consists of: (1) a preamble, introducing the great king, (2) a historical prologue, outlining the king's past actions on behalf of the vassal, (3) stipulations or laws that the vassal must follow, (4) blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience, (5) covenant ratification and (6) succession arrangements of the terms of loyalty. Deuteronomy mirrors these components. The book opens with a preamble (1:1-5) followed by a historical prologue (1:6-4:49). The stipulations are in chapters 5-26, curses and blessings in 27-30, and succession arrangements in 31-34.
- **How does Kline view the relationship between Deuteronomy as a treaty text and as a series of addresses by Moses?** Kline sees Deuteronomy as both a treaty text and the ceremonial words of Moses. He argues that analyzing Deuteronomy in terms of a documentary pattern (the treaty structure) is not incompatible with the fact that it is also presented as a series of addresses by Moses. Kline views Deuteronomy as the libretto of a covenant renewal ceremony, where Moses, as the representative of God (the Great King), presents the covenant terms to the people. The book records both the declarations of Moses and the response of the people (vassals) as part of the ceremony.

- Was there another document behind Deuteronomy, according to the lecture?**
 The lecture explains that the covenant initially established at Sinai can be viewed as a type of "document" behind Deuteronomy. Although the treaty elements at Sinai, described in Exodus, are not as clear in structure as in Deuteronomy, the covenant made at Sinai with the Ten Commandments and the law is the foundation on which the covenant is renewed in Deuteronomy. Thus, Deuteronomy is presented as a renewal and modification of the initial Sinai covenant.
- What is the significance of the concept of "love" in Deuteronomy, and how does it relate to the suzerainty treaty concept?** In Deuteronomy, "love" for God is not simply an emotion but a duty, similar to the way vassals were expected to demonstrate loyalty to their suzerain. The love commanded in Deuteronomy (e.g., Deuteronomy 6:5) is directly linked to obedience, worship, and service to the Lord, mirroring the vassal's obligations to their king. This view of love as practical obedience is consistent with the language used in ancient treaty texts where "love" between the suzerain and vassal was synonymous with loyalty and obedience.
- How does Kline's approach resolve the problem of the two introductions in Deuteronomy?** Traditional critics have noted two seeming introductions in Deuteronomy (chapters 1-4 and 5-11), arguing they suggested a lack of unity in the book. Kline resolves this by pointing out that chapters 1:5-4:49 function as a historical prologue, which is a standard element in suzerainty treaties, and chapters 5-11 are the general stipulations, while chapters 12-26 give more detailed stipulations. Thus, Kline integrates both into the treaty framework, making them logical parts of a unified whole instead of viewing them as contradictory introductions.
- What is the difference between Kline's view of the origin of the covenant form in Deuteronomy and that of von Rad?** Both Kline and von Rad recognize a ceremonial background to Deuteronomy's structure. However, von Rad sees this ceremonial background as deriving from a cultic covenant renewal festival at Shechem, dating it later and rejecting Mosaic authorship. In contrast, Kline argues the form comes from the Mosaic covenant established at Sinai and renewed at Moab. Kline's theory is tied to the treaty form being used from the time of Moses and thus supports the traditional view of Mosaic authorship, while von Rad's theory does not support Mosaic authorship.

- **Why is the origin of the covenant form in the Old Testament important and what are the different views on drawing historical conclusions from this form?**

The origin of the covenant form is important because it helps contextualize its meaning and impact within Israel's history. Some scholars, like Kline, believe it allows them to draw historical conclusions about the time the form arose and was used in Israel, specifically that its adoption was under Moses. Others, like Claus Baltzer and D.J. McCarthy, argue against drawing firm historical conclusions from the form. These scholars prioritize a form-critical approach and are concerned that such historical claims can be subjective and lead to overly generalized interpretations. They acknowledge the form's existence but caution against linking the form with a specific historical setting or origin, while still acknowledging the form indicates the existence of some historical setting that gave rise to it.