

Dr. Robert Vannoy, Deuteronomy, Session 9, Treaty Differences: Hittite, Assyria, Sefire Resources from NotebookLM

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

1. Abstract of Vannoy, Deuteronomy, Session 9, Treaty Differences: Hittite, Assyrian, Sefire, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture analyzes the differing structures and implied relationships between Hittite, Assyrian, and Aramaic treaties, focusing on the presence or absence of elements like historical prologues, basic stipulations, and blessings. The lecture uses this analysis to evaluate Meredith Kline's argument for the Mosaic authorship of Deuteronomy, comparing its structure to the various treaty forms. Scholarly debate surrounding the similarities and differences between these treaty types, particularly regarding the dating of Deuteronomy, is also explored. Different scholars are cited who support contrasting viewpoints on the origin and evolution of the treaty form, and its implications for biblical studies. The lecture concludes by summarizing the debate and presenting the lecturer's perspective.

**2. 13 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Vannoy, Deuteronomy, Session 9 – 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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3. Briefing Document: Vannoy, Deuteronomy, Session 9, Treaty Differences: Hittite, Assyrian, Sefire

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided lecture notes on Deuteronomy and ancient Near Eastern treaties:

Briefing Document: Analysis of Treaty Structures and Implications for Deuteronomy

Main Argument: The lecture primarily focuses on the argument, put forth by Meredith Kline and supported by scholars like Mendenhall and Albright, that the structure of the Book of Deuteronomy more closely resembles the older Hittite treaty form than the later Assyrian and Aramaic (Sefire) forms. This is used as evidence for a Mosaic (earlier) origin of Deuteronomy. The lecture also examines arguments against this position.

I. Key Differences Between Hittite and Assyrian Treaty Forms:

- **Historical Prologue:**
- **Hittite:** Treaties begin with a detailed historical prologue outlining the relationship and past actions of the suzerain (great king) on behalf of the vassal.
- **Assyrian:** Lack any historical prologue. This is a fundamental difference that influences the nature of the treaty. As the lecture states, "the Assyrian treaties don't have basic stipulations, so that's a second structural difference."
- **Quote:** "Now, of course, you don't have a historical prologue in the Assyrian treaties, and so it follows that you don't have that basic stipulation."
- **Basic Stipulation:**
- **Hittite:** Directly follows the historical prologue, outlining the vassal's fundamental obligation of loyalty based on the suzerain's past actions. It's a declaration of allegiance rooted in what the suzerain has done for the vassal.
- **Assyrian:** Do not have a basic stipulation. Instead, they include an oath of allegiance. The crucial difference is the context; the oath is in a context of fear, being enclosed by curses, rather than one of trust and loyalty as in Hittite treaties.
- **Quote:** "In the Hittite treaties you have the historical prologue followed by that basic stipulation which is 'I've done this for you; now, on the basis of what I've done for you, serve me and be loyal to me.'"

- **Blessings and Curses:**
- **Hittite:** Include both blessings for adherence to the treaty and curses for violations.
- **Assyrian:** Primarily consist of curses with no enumerated blessings for keeping the treaty. This reflects the harsher, more demanding nature of the relationship.
- **Quote:** "The Hittite treaties have curses and blessings; the Assyrian treaties have only curses and no blessings."
- **Reciprocity of Stipulations:**
- **Hittite:** Treaties feature reciprocal responsibilities. The great king obligates themselves to do certain things for the vassal.
- **Assyrian:** Stipulations are one-sided. The obligations are primarily on the vassal without any reciprocal obligations on the part of the Assyrian king to protect or provide for the vassal.
- **Quote:** "There is no hint of reciprocal responsibility of the king's obligation to provide for and protect the vassal. That's something that's common in the Hittite treaties."
- **Subject Matter:**
- **Hittite:** Cover a wide range of topics important to both parties involved in the treaty.
- **Assyrian:** Focus primarily on the issue of succession, specifically the succession of King Ashurbanipal from Esarhaddon.
- **Quote:** "In the Assyrian treaty the whole thing is directed to a particular issue, and that is the issue of succession...So when you compare that with the Hittite treaties, the Hittite treaties were not confined to merely one aspect of the relationship between the partners."
- **Overall Spirit:**
- **Hittite:** Characterized by mutual support, trust, and loyalty. The relationship is based on the vassal's gratitude for the suzerain's past actions.
- **Assyrian:** Characterized by harsh demands, threats, and a climate of fear imposed by the Assyrian king on the vassal.

- **Quote:** "So the relationship, instead of being one of mutual support, is one of harsh demand and threats by the Assyrian king placed on the vassal."

II. Aramaic Treaties from Sefire (8th Century BC):

- **Form:** Include a title, list of gods as witnesses, curses, stipulations, reminders for the future, blessings, and curses.
- **Similarities to Assyrian Treaties:**
- **Absence of Historical Prologue:** Like Assyrian treaties, Sefire treaties lack a historical prologue, differentiating them from Hittite treaties.
- **Quote:** "One element in particular is significantly absent, the historical prologue... Indeed, it is precisely this element that is absent from the covenants of the first millennium B.C. whether they be Aramaic or Assyrian."
- **One-Sided Stipulations:** Stipulations primarily regulate the conduct of the vassal, with one exception concerning return of fugitives.
- **Witness Placement:** Witnesses are called upon immediately after the preamble, which is similar to the Assyrian form.
- **Similarities to Hittite Treaties:**
- **Gods of Both Partners as Witnesses:** Sefire treaties list the gods of both the suzerain and the vassal as witnesses, similar to Hittite treaties, but contrasting the Assyrian practice of naming only their own deities.
- **Broader Subject Matter:** Sefire stipulations cover a wider range of topics than the focused nature of Assyrian treaties.
- **Style of Formulation:** Some stipulations in Sefire are close in formulation to those found in Hittite treaties.
- **Conclusion:** Sefire treaties represent an intermediary form, exhibiting characteristics of both Hittite and Assyrian treaties.

III. Arguments and Counterarguments Regarding the Dating of Deuteronomy:

- **Kline's Argument (Mosaic Date):**
- The closer structural and spiritual resemblance of Deuteronomy to Hittite treaties points towards a Mosaic origin (2nd millennium BC).
- **Quote:** "Deuteronomy corresponds more closely in structure and spirit to the earlier Hittite treaties than to either the Sefire treaties or the Assyrian treaties in the eighth and seventh centuries."
- **Arguments Against Kline (Later Dates):**
- **Wiseman, McCarthy, and Weinfield** argue there is no significant difference in form between Hittite and Assyrian treaties, arguing the form was standardized.
- **Thompson and Frankena** argue that Deuteronomy could have adopted a treaty form long after Moses, possibly drawing from Assyrian treaties. They emphasize the presence of curses as a reflection of Assyrian influence.
- **Thompson:** Suggests that the historical prologue might have been assumed or stated orally in Assyrian and Aramaic treaties, and therefore its absence in the text isn't conclusive.
- Claims the existence of a 7th-century treaty with a historical prologue (though the text is debated).
- **Quote:** "The historical prologue argument is not sound because the Assyrian or Aramaic treaties may have either assumed a prologue, or it may have been stated orally."
- **Weinfield:** Proposes that court scribes in the time of Hezekiah and Josiah (7th-6th centuries BC) introduced the Assyrian treaty form to Israel, thus explaining Deuteronomy.
- **Quote:** "There is no justification for regarding the formulation of the Hittite treaties as being unique. Nor is there any basis for Mendenhall's supposition that only Hittite treaties served as the model and archetype of the biblical covenant."

IV. Key Points of Contention:

- **Evolution of Treaty Form:** Kline and others contend for an evolution from the Hittite form to the Assyrian form, with the Sefire treaties falling in the middle. Wiseman, McCarthy, and Weinfield argue for a single, unchanging form.
- **Significance of the Historical Prologue:** Its absence is a key argument for the difference between Hittite and later treaty forms.
- **Direct Influence:** The debate centers on whether the treaties are a direct influence, or if the treaty form was an adoption from an external source.

V. Conclusion:

The lecture establishes a framework for the argument that the Book of Deuteronomy's structure and spirit are much closer to Hittite treaty forms, providing an argument for a Mosaic origin. However, it also highlights the counterarguments by various scholars, asserting that the form could have been adopted later, potentially with influence from Assyrian treaty forms. The lecture ends with the plan to further discuss the counterarguments next week. The overall discussion emphasizes the significance of comparative analysis of treaty forms in understanding the historical context and dating of biblical texts.

This briefing doc should provide a thorough overview of the lecture content and its key points of debate.

4. Study Guide: Vannoy, Deuteronomy, Session 9, Treaty Differences: Hittite, Assyrian, Sefire

Treaty Structures and Deuteronomy: A Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What are the two key structural elements of Hittite treaties that are absent in Assyrian treaties according to Vannoy?
2. How does the context of the oath of allegiance differ between Hittite and Assyrian treaties?
3. What is meant by the claim that stipulations in Assyrian treaties are "one-sided"?
4. According to Mendenhall, why is the covenant type important for studying Israelite traditions?
5. What is the main point of disagreement between scholars like Wiseman, McCarthy, and Weinfeld, and scholars like Kline, Albright, Bright, and Mendenhall regarding treaty structures?
6. How do the Sefire treaties compare with Hittite treaties regarding the historical prologue?
7. What is a key difference in the placement of the witness section in the Sefire treaties compared to Hittite treaties?
8. In what way are the Sefire treaties more similar to Hittite treaties than Assyrian treaties?
9. How does the spirit of the treaty differ between Hittite treaties and Assyrian/Sefire treaties?
10. According to Kline, why does Deuteronomy's structure indicate a Mosaic origin?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The two key structural elements are the historical prologue and the basic stipulation. Hittite treaties include these elements which establish a foundation of past actions and resulting expectations for loyalty, but they are absent in Assyrian treaties.

2. In Hittite treaties, the oath of allegiance follows the historical prologue and is a response to the king's past actions, occurring in a context of trust and loyalty. Conversely, in Assyrian treaties, the oath is framed by curses, creating a context of fear and coercion.
3. The term "one-sided" means that the stipulations in Assyrian treaties only obligate the vassal to the great king. There are no reciprocal obligations or responsibilities placed on the great king to protect or provide for the vassal.
4. Mendenhall says that the Hittite covenant type is important because it provides an ideal early form and because it cannot be shown to exist in the treaties of the later, second millennium B.C. empires like Assyria.
5. Scholars like Wiseman, McCarthy, and Weinfeld argue that the treaty form is basically the same between Hittite and Assyrian treaties. In contrast, scholars like Kline, Albright, Bright, and Mendenhall emphasize the structural and spiritual differences between them.
6. Like Assyrian treaties, the Sefire treaties do not have a historical prologue, which is a significant difference from the Hittite treaties. This absence is a major distinction in the treaty structures.
7. In the Sefire treaties, the witness section, which involves the gods being called upon, is located immediately after the introductory paragraph, while in Hittite treaties, the witness section occurs after the stipulations.
8. Unlike Assyrian treaties that only list their own deities, the Sefire treaties include the gods of both partners, which aligns with the practice found in Hittite treaties. They also have a broader subject matter in the stipulations than the Assyrian treaties.
9. The Hittite treaty spirit emphasizes trust and loyalty, with the vassal responding to the good the king had done for them, while the Assyrian and Sefire treaties are rooted in fear, with harsh demands and threats placed upon the vassal.
10. According to Kline, the structure of Deuteronomy corresponds closely with the early Hittite treaties' structure and spirit, placing it at the classic stage of documentary evolution, thus supporting a Mosaic origin.

Essay Questions

1. Compare and contrast the structures of Hittite, Assyrian, and Sefire treaties. How do these structural differences reflect varying relationships between the contracting parties?
2. Discuss the significance of the historical prologue and basic stipulation in Hittite treaties. Why is their absence in Assyrian and Sefire treaties considered a crucial distinction, and how does it impact treaty interpretation?
3. Analyze the differing scholarly perspectives on the evolution of treaty forms. What arguments do those who claim a significant evolution make, and how do those arguing for continuity challenge those assertions?
4. How does the "spirit" of the treaty differ between Hittite and Assyrian/Sefire treaties? What elements contribute to this difference, and what does it reveal about the power dynamics involved in these treaties?
5. Evaluate Kline's thesis that the structure and spirit of Deuteronomy align most closely with the Hittite treaties, thus supporting a Mosaic date. What are the strengths and weaknesses of his argument?

Glossary of Key Terms

Basic Stipulation: The fundamental obligation of loyalty that a vassal has to a suzerain, typically found in Hittite treaties immediately after the historical prologue.

Curses: Punishments threatened for breaking the stipulations of a treaty, a common element in both Hittite and Assyrian treaties, with Assyrian treaties often focused exclusively on them.

Blessings: Rewards promised for adhering to treaty stipulations; found in Hittite treaties but absent in Assyrian treaties.

Historical Prologue: A section within Hittite treaties that reviews the historical actions and benefits the suzerain (great king) has provided to the vassal, used to justify the treaty's demands.

One-Sided Stipulations: A treaty where the obligations fall only on the vassal, as seen in Assyrian treaties; contrasted with the more reciprocal obligations in Hittite treaties.

Oath of Allegiance: A formal declaration of loyalty from the vassal to the suzerain, particularly prominent in Assyrian treaties, where it's framed by curses.

Sefire Treaties: Aramaic treaties from the 8th century B.C., which exhibit characteristics of both Hittite and Assyrian treaties, making them a sort of intermediary treaty form.

Stipulations: The detailed regulations and obligations that each party to a treaty agrees to follow.

Suzerain: The superior party in a treaty, typically a great king, who grants land and protection to a vassal, which is typical of Hittite treaties.

Vassal: The subordinate party in a treaty, obligated to show loyalty and service to a suzerain.

5. FAQs on Vannoy, Deuteronomy, Session 9, Treaty Differences: Hittite, Assyrian, Sefire, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on Ancient Near Eastern Treaties and Deuteronomy

1. **What are the primary differences between Hittite and Assyrian treaties, and how do these differences impact our understanding of ancient covenants?**
2. Hittite treaties generally include a historical prologue outlining the great king's past benevolence toward the vassal, followed by a basic stipulation emphasizing the vassal's loyalty based on that benevolence. These treaties often feature blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience. The relationship is characterized by a reciprocal nature, with the great king obligated to protect the vassal. Conversely, Assyrian treaties lack a historical prologue and basic stipulation. Instead, they immediately impose an oath of allegiance, often enclosed by curses. These treaties are one-sided, with no mention of the great king's obligations to the vassal. They primarily focus on succession issues and are marked by a harsh tone of demand and threats, emphasizing fear rather than trust and loyalty. These differences highlight contrasting views of power dynamics and covenantal relationships in the ancient Near East, with the Hittite system being more reciprocal and the Assyrian system being more authoritarian.
3. **What role does a "historical prologue" play in Hittite treaties, and why is its absence significant in Assyrian treaties and some Aramaic (Sefire) treaties?**
4. A historical prologue in Hittite treaties serves as a foundation for the vassal's obligation, recounting past acts of kindness and protection by the great king. This prologue established a basis for loyalty and service. Its absence in Assyrian and some Aramaic treaties signals a fundamental shift in the relationship dynamic. Without the historical precedent of benevolence, the vassal's allegiance is primarily based on fear of the king's power and the severe curses attached to disobedience. This lack of historical context points to a more transactional rather than relational form of covenant, which changes how we can understand the nature of the relationship between the parties.

5. **How does the presence or absence of blessings in treaties differentiate Hittite from Assyrian forms, and what does this suggest about the nature of the relationships they establish?**
6. Hittite treaties enumerate both blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience, emphasizing a balanced reward-punishment system tied to the treaty. In contrast, Assyrian treaties predominantly include only curses, reflecting a coercive and fear-based relationship where the vassal has no expectation of positive reinforcement but faces the threat of severe repercussions for non-compliance. The absence of blessings in Assyrian treaties highlights a significant difference in the underlying philosophy behind these agreements, contrasting the Hittite idea of mutual benefit and loyalty with the Assyrian concept of absolute authority and subservience.
7. **In what ways are the stipulations in Assyrian treaties different from those found in Hittite treaties, and what does this reveal about the nature of the power dynamic?**
8. The stipulations in Assyrian treaties are almost entirely one-sided, focusing on the vassal's obligations to the great king with no reciprocal responsibilities from the king to protect or provide for the vassal. This contrasts sharply with Hittite treaties, which often include protection clauses obligating the great king to defend the vassal against enemies. This difference showcases a fundamental disparity in the power dynamic where the Assyrian treaty is about absolute control, whereas the Hittite treaties establish a more balanced sense of responsibility between the two parties.
9. **Where do the Aramaic Sefire treaties fit in relation to Hittite and Assyrian forms, and what does this suggest about the development of treaty structures in the ancient Near East?**
10. The Sefire treaties are a hybrid form with some characteristics of both Hittite and Assyrian treaties. Like Assyrian treaties, they lack a historical prologue and primarily feature one-sided stipulations. However, unlike Assyrian treaties, they include the gods of both parties as witnesses and have a broader range of stipulations than the narrow focus on succession in Assyrian texts. This intermediary position suggests a development or adaptation of treaty forms over time, indicating that the classic Hittite model did not remain static and was gradually modified or abandoned by later cultures.

11. **What is the significance of the placement of the witness section (listing of gods) in the different treaties, and how does this align with broader structural differences?**
12. In Hittite treaties, the witness section is located after the stipulations, whereas in Assyrian and Sefire treaties, the witness section is placed right after the introductory paragraphs or title. This placement, along with other structural differences, reflects the shift away from the historical foundation of the treaty towards a focus on immediate oath and obligation. The placement of witnesses also reinforces the distinct spirit of these treaties, with Hittite treaties emphasizing a relationship built on a covenantal history, while later forms emphasize an immediate demand of obedience.
13. **How does the structure of Deuteronomy compare to these ancient treaty forms, and what does this comparison suggest about its potential dating?**
14. Deuteronomy exhibits a structure and spirit that closely aligns with the earlier Hittite treaty form. It includes a historical prologue that recounts God's past acts on behalf of Israel, a basic stipulation emphasizing Israel's loyalty, and the blessings and curses associated with adherence or disobedience. These structural similarities suggest a possible earlier, Mosaic date for Deuteronomy, aligning with the era of Hittite influence, as opposed to a later origin under Assyrian influence. This argument is bolstered by the absence of the fear and one-sidedness which characterizes later treaty forms like the Assyrian ones.
15. **What are the main points of contention among scholars regarding the dating and the significance of the treaty analogy in understanding Deuteronomy?**
16. Some scholars, like D.J. Wiseman, McCarthy, and Weinfield, argue that there is no substantial difference between Hittite and Assyrian treaties, suggesting that the covenant form remained largely unchanged over time. They propose that Deuteronomy may have adopted this form from Assyrian traditions during the later monarchy. Others, including Kline, Albright, Bright, and Mendenhall, argue that significant structural and thematic differences exist between Hittite and Assyrian treaties and that Deuteronomy's structure is most similar to the earlier Hittite treaties, thus supporting a Mosaic origin for Deuteronomy. The central point of contention is whether the treaty form was a static or evolving model, and whether its characteristics provide conclusive evidence for the dating of Deuteronomy. Scholars debate the significance of elements like the historical prologue, the presence of blessings, and the reciprocal nature of stipulations.