

Hittite Suzerainty Treaty Structure

Perhaps the most unusual feature of Deuteronomy is its form. Moses adopts as a pattern for his message the Hittite type of suzerainty treaty. This treaty type was not used after 1200 b.c., a fact which supports Mosaic authorship of the book. The treaty structure invites us to see Deuteronomy as a national constitution: a binding agreement made between God as the nation's ruler, and Israel as His people. The well-known treaty format, and its match to the Book of Deuteronomy, is:

Treaty format	Intent	Deuteronomy passage
Historical prologue	Defines relationship of ruler to subjects	1:6–3:29
Basic stipulations	Defines general principles guiding behavior	5:1–11:32
Detailed stipulations	Lists some specific rules to be followed	12:1–26:19
Document clause	Citizens ratify constitution	27:1–26
Blessings	Lists benefits of relationship	28:1–14
Curses	Lists penalties for breaking treaty regulations	28:15–68
Recapitulation	Reviews and sums up the treaty	29:1–30:10

¹Larry Richards, *The Bible Reader's Companion*, Includes Index. (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1991), 116.