

Pentateuch 17

Some Crucial Pieces of Exodus

The Book the Covenant (Exodus 20-24)¹

No other ancient Near Eastern religion attests a berît (“covenant”) between a god and his people outside of Israel.²

Formally, however, the Law given at Sinai, if reckoned in its entirety from Exodus 20 through Leviticus and in its covenant renewal on the plains of Moab, is a mixture of the forms of ancient Near Eastern laws from the third/early second millennium and of vassal treaties from the late second millennium.

Its elements are best profiled by noting the parallels with the vassal treaties the Hittite king authored and issued to his vassal kings.³

These treaties include:

- I. A preamble identifying the greatness of the author:
 - A. ANE
 - 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.
 - B. Bible
 - 1. But how much greater the Author of the covenant: “I am the Lord your God” (Exod. 20:1; Deut. 5:23–27).
 - 2. Reformers separated v.2 from 3 based on grammar also.
- II. A historical prologue:
 - A. ANE
 - 1. When your father died [Duppi Tessub], in accordance with your father’s word I did not drop you. Since your father had mentioned to me your name, 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.
 - 2. “This history is the basis for your obligation. Parenthetically, if the history were to create any sense of obligation, it had to be substantially accurate.”⁴
 - B. Bible
 - 1. The treaty finds its parallel in Exodus 20:2, “who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the land of slavery” (cf. Deut. 2:7; 4:32–38; contrast Exod. 20:8–11)

¹ Waltke

² D. J. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant: A Study in Form in the Ancient Oriental Documents and in the Old Testament* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1963).

³ Kenneth A. Kitchen, “The Fall and Rise of Covenant, Torah and Treaty,” *TynBul* 40, no. 1 (1989): 118–35.

⁴ Delbert R. Hillers, *Covenant: The History of a Biblical Idea* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1969), 31.

with Deut. 5:12–15). Throughout the Old Testament covenant renewals are connected with celebrating Passover (2 Kings 23:21–23; 2 Chron. 30:1–27; 35:1–3; Ezra 6:19–22). When the Israelites teach their children the meaning of the covenant stipulations, they begin the lesson by reminding them that I AM redeemed them from Egypt and brought them to the land. The covenant is a matter of the heart—of trust, devotion, and obedience—not of imposed law. In other words, by definition it entails a circumcised heart.

III. Stipulations to advance the great kingdom:

A. ANE

1. But you, Duppi-Tessub, remain loyal toward the king of the Hatti land, the Hatti land, my sons (and) my grandsons forever!
2. The tribute that was imposed upon your grandfather and your father ... you shall present them likewise. Do not turn your eyes to anyone else! With my friend you shall be friend, and with my enemy you shall be enemy.
3. Other treaty stipulations include being loyal to the suzerain in war, returning political refugees to him, and abstaining from murmuring but reporting the name of anyone who does murmur.

B. Bible

1. The stipulation finds its parallel in Exodus 20:3 and above all in Deuteronomy 6:5.

IV. Provisions for deposit of text and for public reading:

A. ANE

1. A duplicate of this tablet has been deposited before the Sun-goddess of Arinna, because the Sun-goddess of Arinna regulates kingship and queenship. In the Mitanni land (a duplicate) has been deposited before Tessub.... At regular intervals shall they read it in the presence of the king of the Mitanni land and in the presence of the sons of the Hurri country.

B. Bible

1. This provision finds its parallel in Deuteronomy 10:1–5 and 31:9–13, 24–25, but not in Exodus.

10 Commandments

- I. Over 600 further laws follow. From your reading of Exodus, do the 10 commandments stand apart from these 600 laws?
- II. The over 600 laws are categorized by theologians as ‘case law.’
 - A. Latin-Casus
 1. OED—an instance of a particular situation; an example of something occurring:
 2. OED—casuist; a person who resolves moral problems by the application of theoretical rules to particular instances.
- III. WCF: 19:4 To them also, as a body politic, he gave sundry judicial laws, which expired together with the state of that people, not obliging any other now, farther than the general equity thereof may require.
 - A. General equity thereof may require?