

Comparison of Deuteronomy with an Ancient World Treaty

It has been observed that the basic structure of Deuteronomy parallels the format of treaties developed and executed between nations and people groups in the ancient world. The table below shows the six basic elements in ancient world treaties and their counterparts in Deuteronomy.

This would not only have been a powerful testimony to all people when given through Moses to Israel, but to us today as well. God provided, in writing, His pact with His chosen people Israel. Whereas the kings of ancient earth often gloried in the treaties and alliances they'd negotiated – and sometimes even identified themselves by such benefactors – no nation but Israel had such an arrangement with their gods; and Israel had that with the One True God.

Element	Description	Equivalent
Preamble	Names the author of the treaty	Chapter 1
Historical Prologue	Sets out the relations between the parties prior to signing the treaty	Chapters 1-3
Stipulations	Explains the mutual responsibilities of the partners	Chapters 4-26
Document Clause	Describes the treaty documents & arranges the vassal to read it at regular intervals	Chapter 27
List of Gods	Witnesses to the treaty	4:26, 30:19, 31:28 (heaven & earth); 31:19, 31:21 (a song); 31:26 (a copy of Deuteronomy)
Curses & Blessings	Threatens the vassal with illness, death, deportation, etc. if he breaks the treaty, but promises prosperity & blessing if he remains faithful	Chapter 28