

HOSEA - LESSON 23

ASSYRIAN VASSAL TREATIES

The terms of the relationship between Assyria and its vassal states were defined by written treaties. Assyria, as the superior party, dictated all of the conditions to the second party. Although the treaties always included heavy demands, there were some advantages to being aligned with Assyria, such as protection from enemy attacks.

The treaties follow a set structure that includes a preamble, a historical introduction, treaty stipulations, a vow, violation clauses, and curses. From the Assyrian point of view, compliance with the treaty was a sure test of loyalty, and violation of a treaty brought a swift Assyrian military response.

The texts of just over a dozen treaties have been found, most of which have been recovered from cities in Assyria. The longest and best preserved example (shown on the right) is Esarhaddon's 672 BC treaty concerning the succession of his son, Ashurbanipal, to the throne of Assyria. In this tablet, the governor of the Assyrian province of Kinalia and other local officials in the provincial administration swear a loyalty oath to the Assyrian king.

