

**Biblical Law Section**  
**Abstracts for 2008 Session on Deuteronomy**

Raju Kunjummen

Michigan Theological Seminary

*The Syntax of Conditionals in Deuteronomy and Translation of wqatal (consecutive perfects)*

In the typical case law in Deuteronomy, the protasis is introduced by a ky yqtl clause, the protasis continued by wqtl clauses, the apodosis presented with a yqtl clause, and the rationale that underlies the apodosis, if stated, with a subordinate clause introduced by ky (13:1-3[2-4]; 17:14-15; 19:1-2; 20:1, 19; 21:15-17; 22:6-7). In the less common structure, when a wqtl introduces an apodosis, if there is a series of such clauses, they all belong with the apodosis and do not introduce a new protasis. Even here, usually there is a climactic statement using the yqtl verb (19:11-13, 16-19; 21:1-9, 18-21; 22:22). If a wqtl clause begins the apodosis, if there is a new protasis, it is marked lexically, with a particle like 'im (20:10-13; 21:10-14). In some instances when translations use context-based intuition to render a wqtl clause following a protasis as an apodotic clause, such an interpretation can be seen as not required (13:13-16; 17:2-5). When a wqtl within an extended series of such clauses in a conditional can be understood as an intermediate apodosis, it is prescriptive rather than permissive and procedurally contributes to the determination of the facts of the case (13:13-16; 17:2-5; 22:13-19). The study was undertaken out of interest in the interpretation of Deut 24:1-4, particularly the translation of the last clause of v.1, and the findings are extremely pertinent to that issue.

Joshua Berman

Bar Ilan University

*Who was the Vassal King of the Sinai Covenant?*

In the fifty years since scholars first discerned that the Sinai covenant hews closely to the form of the Late Bronze Age suzerainty treaties of the Hittite empire, the assumption has been that within the Sinai covenant, it is the people of Israel whom assume the role of the vassal king. This assumption needs to be qualified: the parallels between the language and form of the Hittite treaties and those of the covenant passages in Exodus and Deuteronomy reveal that the individual Israelite is the vassal king, no less than the corporate body of Israel as a whole. The Hittite treaties themselves were always construed as the relationship between two individual kings, and, with a single exception, never between the Hittite king and a neighboring people. The Sinai treaty, moreover, demonstrates far greater affinity with the treaties between the Hittite king and his vassal king, than it does with the lone treaty in which the Hittite king engages an entire people as a vassal kingdom. The emphasis on God's relationship with each individual Israelite is seen in the locus classicus of the "treaty stipulations", the commands of the Decalogue, all of which relate to individual Israelites with no commands that are to be executed by the nation as corporate entity. Further, the language used to describe the regular court appearances of the vassal king before the Hittite sovereign parallels the language of the command of pilgrimage to each Israelite male. Finally, the language calling upon the vassal king to have the treaty tablet periodically read in his presence, parallels the reading of the treaty with God before all members

of the Israelite polity at Sinai (Ex. 24), and later at Shechem (Josh 8) and in the Deuteronomic mandate of Hakhel.

Peter Altmann

Princeton Theological Seminary

*Material Culture and the Symbolic Meaning of Meat in Deuteronomy 12*

Deuteronomy 12:13-27 obviously suggests movement towards a central place, but there is also centrifugal movement back to the villages of the divinely given land. Both the centrifugal and centripetal directives focus on offerings, particularly their consumption and enjoyment. However, while the ordinances dealing with the central place highlight offerings in general, the primary concern in the “gates” is communal meat consumption. In this paper, I will argue that Deuteronomy’s narrow focus on meat consumption functions as a direct and incisive response to the felt concerns of residents in Judea during the time of the Assyrian hegemony in the late eighth through the seventh century B.C.E. Deuteronomy 12 keys in on the “promise” of meat consumption in local villages in order to show that the LORD is a beneficent deity who deserves full allegiance. This promise becomes especially attractive in the face of the restricted amount of meat available for consumption due to the Assyrian hegemony. The Deuteronomic provision for local meat consumption inherently offers the Israelites a desirable commodity. In order to work out this proposal, I will discuss the symbolic importance of meat in the biblical and ancient Near Eastern texts, iconography, and Iron Age II material remains. Finally I will present a reading of Deuteronomy 12 showing the symbolic importance of “meat” as a focusing element for the concerns of the Iron Age II audience.

Alex Jassen

University of Minnesota-Twin Cities

*What Word Exactly Cannot be Spoken? Isaiah 58:13 and the Sabbath Prohibition on Business Related Speech in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Jubilees, and Rabbinic Literature*

The Dead Sea Scrolls represent a vast treasure trove for scholars interested in the comparative analysis of early Jewish biblical interpretation and in the history of Jewish law. Scholarship on biblical interpretation, however, has focused almost exclusively on homiletical exegesis. There has been little attempt to integrate the study of Jewish law in the Dead Sea Scrolls with the exegetical basis in Scripture through which it was regularly formed. The present paper seeks to address these issues through comparative analysis of the Sabbath restrictions on discussion of business as articulated in the Qumran legal texts (Damascus Document, 4QHalakha B) and related Second Temple (Jubilees) and rabbinic literature. In examining these texts, my attention will first be directed to unpacking the legal issues at stake in each passage and identifying the nature of the textual and literary relationship between their overlapping legal content. I then turn to their exegetical basis in Scripture. The formulation of each of these passages is exegetically linked to Isaiah 58:13 (Isaiah’s condemnation of pursuing one’s affairs on the Sabbath). The specific way in which each of these passages formulates its Sabbath business laws is directly linked to legal and exegetical exigencies found in the Isaiah passage. In particular, each text seeks to determine the precise legal application of Isaiah’s condemnation of “speaking a word”

on the Sabbath. In each passage, keywords from Isaiah are interwoven into a new more precise and expanded legal formulation, often with the aid of intertextual appeal to related scriptural passages. Comparative analysis of the Sabbath restrictions on discussion of business in the Qumran corpus and related Second Temple and rabbinic literature demonstrates a shared set of legal and exegetical concerns and similarly closely related approaches to resolving these difficulties.