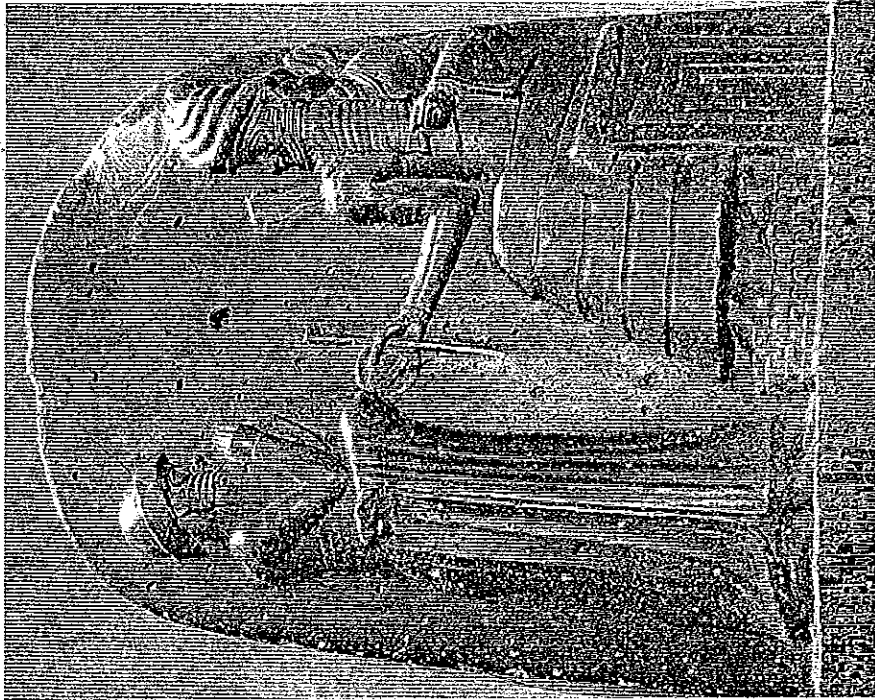




What is The Code of Hammurabi?

Source



21050771-Louvre.codia-Hammurabi_bas-relief_rv4.jpg by Mbrz is published under the CC-BY 3.0 Unported license



Watch the [Turning Points in Law: the Code of Hammurabi of Law, video](#) and respond to the questions below. (0:00-1:55)

What did you learn about the Code of Hammurabi from you video excerpt?

➔ **Directions:** Read the excerpt below, then respond to the questions.

literate: able to read

scribes: a person who copies out documents

offense: an illegal act

Hammurabi is best known for The Code of Hammurabi. This was one of the first codified or written law codes. It was written around 1754 BC. It was written on a stele, or a large stone monument, and placed in a public place so that all could see it. Even though it was visible for all to see, few were literate enough to read the cuneiform writing. A carving at the top of the stele shows King Hammurabi receiving the laws from the god Shamash. The inscription states that King Hammurabi was chosen by the gods of his people to bring the laws to them.

The Code of Hammurabi contained 282 laws. These laws were written by scribes on 12 tablets. The Code consists of rules and the punishments for if those rules were broken. The structure of the code is very detailed: each offense receiving a particular punishment.

Hammurabi's law code set the standard for future codes because it dealt with the evidence of the crime. What decide one's guilt or innocence was something called the Ordeal. During the Ordeal, the accused person was sentenced to perform a certain task such as being thrown into a river or swimming a certain distance across a river and, if they succeeded, they were innocent. If they did not survive the ordeal, they were considered guilty.

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Name: _____ Period: _____ Date: _____

HAMMURABI'S CODE

HAMMURABI WAS KING OF BABYLON AROUND 1750 B.C. HIS GREATEST LEGACY WAS HIS LIST OF LAWS RELATING TO EVERYDAY LIFE, FROM THE MOST SEVERE CRIMES, TO MARRIAGES, TO TRADING REGULATIONS. HAMMURABI BELIEVED THAT A SINGLE, UNIFORM CODE WOULD UNIFY THE MANY DIVERSE GROUPS OF HIS EMPIRE. HAMMURABI'S CODE WAS ACTUALLY A COLLECTION OF EXISTING LAWS, RULES, AND JUDGEMENTS THAT HAD ALREADY EXISTED IN MESOPOTAMIA FOR MANY YEARS. HAMMURABI HAD HIS SET OF LAWS ENGRAVED ON STONE TABLETS AND PLACED AROUND HIS EMPIRE FOR ALL TO SEE. HERE ARE A SELECTED FEW FROM THE ALMOST 300 LAWS OF HAMMURABI'S CODE:

With your partners first read the questions on the back of this worksheet. Then read the below excerpts from Hammurabi's Code. After that, answer the questions that follow.

1. If a person accused another person and brought a charge of murder against him, but has not proved it, his accuser shall be put to death.
6. If a person stole the property of a church or state, that person shall be put to death; and also the one who received the stolen goods from his hand shall be put to death.
15. If a person has helped either a male slave or a female slave to escape through the city gate, he shall be put to death.
22. If a person committed robbery and has been caught that person shall be put to death.
129. If the wife of a person has been caught while lying with another man, they shall bind them both and throw them into the water. If the husband of the wife wishes to spare his wife, then the king in turn may spare his subject.
143. If (a wife) was not careful, but was a gadabout, thus neglecting her house and humiliating her husband, they shall throw that woman into the water.
195. If a son has struck his father, they shall cut off his hand.
196. If a person has destroyed the eye of a member of the aristocracy, they shall destroy his eye.
197. If he has broken another person's bone, they shall break his bone.
200. If a person has knocked out the tooth of a person of his own rank, they shall knock out his tooth.
202. If a person has struck the cheek of a person who is superior to him, he shall be beaten sixty times with an oxtail whip in the assembly.
229. If a builder constructed a house for a person, but did not make his work strong, with the result that the house which he built collapsed and so caused the death of the owner of the house, that builder shall be put to death.

237. When a person hired a boatman and a boat and loaded it with grain, wool, oil, dates, or any kind of freight, if that boatman was so careless that he has sunk the boat and lost what was in it as well, the boatman shall make good the boat that he sank and whatever he lost that was in it.

250. If an ox, when it was walking along the street, gored a person to death, that cause is not subject to claim.

1. Which of these codes are examples of "an eye for an eye" justice? Explain.

2. Which of these codes provide evidence that not everyone was equal in Babylon? Explain.

3. Though many of these laws are strict and harsh, what advantages do they create?

4. Do you think Hammurabi's Code would be effective in keeping law and order? Explain why or why not.