

A Selection from the Code of Hammurabi

If a judge try a case, reach a decision, and present his judgment in writing; if later error shall appear in his decision, and it be through his own fault, then he shall pay twelve times the fine set by him in the case, and he shall be publicly removed from the judge's bench, and never again shall he sit there to render judgment.

If any one owe a debt for a loan, and a storm prostrates the grain, or the harvest fail, or the grain does not grow for lack of water; in that year he need not give his creditor any grain, he washes his debt-tablet in water and pays no rent for this year.

If any one be too lazy to keep his dam in proper condition, and does not so keep it: if then the dam break and all the fields be flooded, then shall he in whose dam the break occurred be sold for money, and the money shall replace the corn which he has caused to be ruined.

If any one give another silver, gold, or anything else to keep, he shall show everything to some witness, draw up a contract, and then hand it over for safe keeping.

If any one place his property with another for safe keeping, and there, either through thieves or robbers, his property and the property of the other man be lost, the owner of the house, through whose neglect the loss took place, shall compensate the owner for all that was given to him in charge. But the owner of the house shall try to follow up and recover his property, and take it away from the thief.

If a man wish to put his son out of his house, and declare before the judge: "I want to put my son out," then the judge shall examine into his reasons. If the son be guilty of no great fault, for which he can be rightfully put out, the father shall not put him out.

If a man take a wife, and she be seized by disease, if he then desire to take a second wife he shall not put away his wife, who has been attacked by disease, but he shall keep her in the house which he has built and support her so long as she lives.

If a builder build a house for some one, even though he has not yet completed it; if then the walls seem toppling, the builder must make the walls solid from his own means.

If a builder build a house for some one, and does not construct it properly, and the house which he built fall in and kill its owner, then that builder shall be put to death.

If a veterinary surgeon perform a serious operation on an ass or an ox, and cure it, the owner shall pay the surgeon one-sixth of a shekel as a fee.

If he perform a serious operation on an ass or ox, and kill it, he shall pay the owner one-fourth of its value.

You may download, print and make copies of these pages for use in your classroom, provided that you include the copyright notice shown below in all such copies.

Copyright © 1999 Houghton Mifflin Company. All Rights Reserved.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Examining a Law

Choose 5 of Hammurabi's Laws from the A Selection from the Code of Hammurabi worksheet. Carefully read each law you chose and answer the following questions for each law:

Who is involved? What are they told to do or not to do? What are the stated consequences of complying or not complying with the law?

Law 1:

Law 2:

Law 3:

Law 4:

Law 5:

You may download, print and make copies of these pages for use in your classroom, provided that you include the copyright notice shown below in all such copies.

Copyright © 1999 Houghton Mifflin Company. All Rights Reserved.

EXAMING A LAW CONTINUED:

Answer the below questions:

1. What do you think of Hammurabi's laws? Do you think they are fair? Clear? Harsh or easy? Explain.

2. If you could choose, would you live under Hammurabi's laws? Why or why not?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Comparing Hammurabi to Today

With your group, choose 3 of Hammurabi's laws. State each law in your own words. Then compare each law to a law or laws we have today.

Law 1 (in your own words):

How is it similar to a law today?

How is it different from laws today?

Law 2 (in your own words):

How is it similar to a law today?

How is it different from laws today?

Law 3 (in your own words):

How is it similar to a law today?

How is it different from laws today?

You may download, print and make copies of these pages for use in your classroom, provided that you include the copyright notice shown below in all such copies.

Copyright © 1999 Houghton Mifflin Company. All Rights Reserved.