

## Hammurabi Code of Laws Excerpts

Source: Hammurabi, **The Oldest Code of Laws in the World, the Code of Laws Promulgated by Hammurabi, King of Babylon, 2285-2242, B.C.** (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1911)

*Of the several law codes surviving from the ancient Middle East, the most famous after the Hebrew Torah is the Code of Hammurabi. It encodes many laws (282) which had likely evolved over a long period of time, but is interesting to the general reader because of what it tells us about the attitudes and daily lives of the ancient Babylonians. In the following selection, the long prologue praising Hammurabi's power and wisdom is omitted.*

**2: If anyone brings an accusation against a man, and the accused goes to the river and leaps into the river, if he sinks in the river his accuser shall take possession of his house. But if the river proves that the accused is not guilty, and he escapes unhurt, then he who had brought the accusation shall be put to death, while he who leaped into the river shall take possession of the house that had belonged to his accuser.**

**108: If a [woman wine-seller] does not accept [grain] according to gross weight in payment of drink, but takes money, and the price of the drink is less than that of the corn, she shall be convicted and thrown into the water.**

**109: If conspirators meet in the house of a [woman wine-seller], and these conspirators are not captured and delivered to the court, the [wine-seller] shall be put to death.**

**110: If a "sister of a god"[nun] open a tavern, or enter a tavern to drink, then shall this woman be burned to death.**

**195: If a son strike his father, his hands shall be [cut] off.**

**196: If a [noble-]man put out the eye of another [noble-]man, his eye shall be put out.**

**197: If he break another [noble-]man's bone, his bone shall be broken.**

**198: If he put out the eye of a [commoner], or break the bone of a [commoner], he shall pay one [silver] mina.**

**199: If he put out the eye of a man's slave, or break the bone of a man's slave, he shall pay one-half of its value.**

**200: If a man knock out the teeth of his equal, his teeth shall be knocked out.**

**209: If a man has struck a free woman with child, and has caused her to miscarry, he shall pay ten shekels for her miscarriage.**

**210: If that woman die, his daughter shall be killed.**

**Hammurabi, the king of righteousness, on whom Shamash has conferred right (or law) am I. My words are well considered; my deeds are not equaled; to bring low those that were high; to humble the proud, to expel insolence.**

**Referring to the Code of Hammurabi (provided), answer the following questions:**

1. What is the penalty if a noble-man puts out the eye of a commoner?
  - A. One of his bones is broken
  - B. His eye is put out
  - C. He pays one mina
  - D. He pays one-half mina
  
2. Which combination of numbered laws clearly show a distinction between the classes?
  - A. 110 and 195
  - B. 196 and 197
  - C. 198 and 199
  - D. 200 and 209
  
3. For which audience were the laws written?
  - A. Only the literate population
  - B. The entire Babylonian population
  - C. The upper class citizens
  - D. The commoners and slaves
  
4. Which of the following accurately represents the main purpose of the laws?
  - A. Punish people
  - B. Extend slavery
  - C. Raise taxes
  - D. Establish order
  
5. Which of the following social aspects of Babylon is NOT illustrated through these laws?
  - A. Egalitarianism
  - B. Respect for elders
  - C. Patriarchy
  - D. Literacy