

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)

1. If a man weaves a spell and puts a ban upon another man and has not justified himself, he that wove the spell upon him shall be put to death.
2. If a man has put a spell upon another man and has not justified himself, he upon whom the spell is laid shall go to the holy river. He shall plunge into the holy river, and if the holy river overcomes him, he who wove the spell upon him shall take to himself his house. If the holy river makes that man to be innocent, and has saved him, he who laid the spell upon him shall be put to death. He who plunged into the holy river shall take to himself the house of him who wove the spell upon him.
3. If a man, in a case pending judgment, has uttered threats against the witnesses, or has not justified the word that he has spoken, if that case be a capital suit, that man shall be put to death.
4. If he has offered corn or money to the witnesses, he shall himself bear the sentence of that case.
5. If a judge has judged a judgment, decided a decision, granted a sealed sentence, and afterwards has altered his judgment, that judge, for the alteration of the judgment that he judged, shall be put him to account, and he shall pay twelvefold the penalty which was in the said judgment, and in the assembly one shall expel him from his judgment seat, and he shall not return, and with the judges at a judgment he shall not take his seat.
6. If a man has stolen the goods of a temple or palace, that man shall be killed, and he who has received the stolen thing from his hand shall be put to death.
7. If a man has bought silver, gold, manservant or maidservant, ox or sheep or ass, or anything whatever its name, from the hand of a man's son, or of a man's slave, without witness and bonds, or has received the same on deposit, than that man has acted the thief, and he shall be put to death.
8. If a man has stolen ox or sheep or ass or pig or ship, whether from the temple or the palace, he shall pay thirtyfold. If he be a poor man, he shall render tenfold. If the thief has nought to pay, he shall be put to death.
9. If a man who has lost something of his, and something of his that is lost has been seized in the hand of a man, and the man in whose hand the lost thing has been seized has said, "A giver gave it to me," or "I bought it before witnesses," and the owner of the thing that is lost has said, "Verily, I will bring witnesses that know my lost property." The buyer has brought the giver who gave it to him and the witnesses before whom he bought it, and the owner of the lost property has brought the witnesses who know his lost property, the judge shall see their depositions. The witnesses before whom the purchase was made and the witnesses knowing the lost property shall say out before God what they know; and if the giver has acted the thief he shall be put to death. The owner of the lost property shall take his lost property, and the buyer shall take the money he paid from the house of the giver.

10. If the buyer has not brought the giver who gave it to him and the witnesses before whom he bought it, and the owner of the lost property has brought the witnesses knowing his lost property, the buyer has acted the thief. He shall be put to death; the owner of the lost property shall take his lost property.
11. If the owner of the lost property has not brought witnesses knowing his lost property, he has lied. He has stirred up strife; he shall be put to death.
12. If the giver has betaken himself to his fate, the buyer shall take from the house of the giver fivefold as the penalty of that case.
13. If that man has not his witnesses near, the judge shall set him a fixed time, up to six months, and if within six months he has not driven in his witnesses, that man has lied. He himself shall bear the blame of that case.
14. If a man has stolen the son of a freeman, he shall be put to death.
15. If a man has caused either a palace slave or palace maid, or a slave of a poor man or a poor man's maid, to go out of the gate, he shall be put to death.
16. If a man has harboured in his house a manservant or a maidservant, fugitive from the palace, or a poor man, and has not produced them at the demand of the commandant, the owner of that house shall be put to death.
17. If a man has captured either a manservant or a maidservant, as a fugitive in the open country, and has driven him back to his master, the owner of the slave shall pay him two shekels of silver.
18. If that slave will not name his owner, he shall drive him to the palace, and one shall enquire into his past, and cause him to return to his owner.