Name: World History

Date:

Excerpt from The Code of Hammurabi

Hammurabi was the king of Babylon in Mesopotamia. He set up one of the earliest written sets of laws in history. It was called the Code of Hammurabi. It covered almost everything that affected the community, including family relations, business conduct and crime. Hammurabi wanted to unify his empire and provide order and protection for the weak. This provided a model for other far-flung empires. Some of the laws were as follows:

1. If a man destroys the eye of another man, his eye shall be destroyed. If he breaks the bone of another, his bone shall be broken.
2. If a son strikes his father, they shall cut off his hand.
3. If a fire breaks out in a house and the house collapses and kills the owner of the house, the builder shall be put to death. If the house collapses and kills the owner’s son, then the son of the builder shall be put to death.
4. If a person accuses another person of a crime, the accused shall go to the river and jump in. If he drowns, the person who accused him may have the accused person’s house. If the accused doesn’t drown, the River-God has decided that he is innocent. The person who made the accusation is to be put to death, and the accused shall that his house.
5. If anyone opens his ditches to water his crop, but is careless, and the water floods the field of his neighbor, the he shall pay his neighbor corn for his loss.
6. If he be not able to replace the corn, then he and his possessions shall be divided among farmers whose corn he has flooded.
7. If a man’s wife becomes sick, the husband may take a second wife, but must continue to care for the sick wife as long as she lives.
8. If a person steals from a temple or takes goods stolen from the temple, he shall be put to death.

**Response Questions:**

1. Why did Hammurabi want to set up a system of laws (refer to the introduction paragraph)?
2. Does it appear that Hammurabi’s Code was applied to everyone within Babylon? Why or why not?
3. What type of government existed in Babylon and how do you know?
4. When looking at given law numbers 3 and 4, what conclusion can you draw about the fairness of the laws in Hammurabi’s Code? Explain your reasoning.
5. What do the laws in Hammurabi’s code show about social class within ancient Babylon? Provide examples to support your answer. (refer to given laws 3 and 7)
6. If one was to apply Hammurabi’s code to the laws in our society today, what would some of the laws be? Explain.