

The Law Code of Hammurabi

In December of 1901 through January of 1902, archaeologists at Susa excavated the three pieces of an eight-foot high black marble monolith on which was inscribed the laws of Babylon as decreed by Hammurabi, king of Babylon from 1792 – 1750 BC. It is telling and important that the monolith was located at Susa, the capital of Elam. We can surmise that the code was produced in several copies and distributed throughout Hammurabi's domains and we can be certain that it was a public document, intended to be read by anyone. The first element of the Rule of Law, so fundamental to Occidental jurisprudence, is that the law must be public, must be accessible to all, so that any person who had dealings with the law can know the letter of the law prior to appearing before a judge.

R. H. Pfeiffer 1920¹ has suggested a tripartite division of the code along the same thematic lines as the Roman *jus civile*, admitting himself that the similarities are coincidental. The three parts are sections 1 – 5 procedural law, sections 6 – 126 property law and sections 127 – 282 the law of persons. I have divided the laws into more specific categories, but all of these divisions are arbitrary and no such divisions are indicated on the original.

What follows is the L. W. King translation (1915).

The Law Code of Hammurabi

Proem:

When Anu² the Sublime, King of the Anunaki,³ and Bel,⁴ the lord of Heaven and earth, who decreed the fate of the land, assigned to Marduk, the over-ruling son of Ea, God of righteousness, dominion over earthly man, and made him great among the Igigi, they called Babylon by his illustrious name, made it great on earth, and founded an everlasting kingdom in it, whose foundations are laid so solidly as those of heaven and earth; then Anu and Bel called by name me, Hammurabi, the exalted prince, who feared God, to bring about the rule of righteousness in the land, to destroy the wicked and the evil-doers; so that the strong

¹ An Analysis of the Hammurabi Code. *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 36.4: 310 – 315

² The sky god, king of heaven.

³ The Anunaki are the children of Anu.

⁴ Here the title *Bel* refers to Anu: He is father and king of the Anunaki and he is *Bel*, king of heaven. In Akkadian the word *bel* means simply *master* or *lord*. At #16 below, for example, *bel bitim* is the phrase for “master of the house.”

should not harm the weak; so that I should rule over the black-headed people like Shamash, and enlighten the land, to further the well-being of mankind.

Hammurabi, the prince, called of Bel am I, making riches and increase, enriching Nippur and Dur-ilu beyond compare, sublime patron of E-kur; who re-established Eridu and purified the worship of E-apsu; who conquered the four quarters of the world, made great the name of Babylon, rejoiced the heart of Marduk, his lord who daily pays his devotions in Saggil; the royal scion whom Sin made; who enriched Ur; the humble, the reverent, who brings wealth to Gish-shir-gal; the white king, heard of Shamash, the mighty, who again laid the foundations of Sippara; who clothed the gravestones of Malkat with green; who made E-babbar great, which is like the heavens, the warrior who guarded Larsa and renewed E-babbar, with Shamash as his helper; the lord who granted new life to Uruk, who brought plenteous water to its inhabitants, raised the head of E-anna, and perfected the beauty of Anu and Nana; shield of the land, who reunited the scattered inhabitants of Isin; who richly endowed E-gal-mach; the protecting king of the city, brother of the god Zamama; who firmly founded the farms of Kish, crowned E-me-te-ursag with glory, redoubled the great holy treasures of Nana, managed the temple of Harsag-kalama; the grave of the enemy, whose help brought about the victory; who increased the power of Cuthah; made all glorious in E-shidlam, the black steer, who gored the enemy; beloved of the god Nebo, who rejoiced the inhabitants of Borsippa, the Sublime; who is indefatigable for E-zida; the divine king of the city; the White, Wise; who broadened the fields of Dilbat, who heaped up the harvests for Urash; the Mighty, the lord to whom come scepter and crown, with which he clothes himself; the Elect of Ma-ma; who fixed the temple bounds of Kesh, who made rich the holy feasts of Nin-tu; the provident, solicitous, who provided food and drink for Lagash and Girsu, who provided large sacrificial offerings for the temple of Ningirsu; who captured the enemy, the Elect of the oracle who fulfilled the prediction of Hallab, who rejoiced the heart of Anunit; the pure prince, whose prayer is accepted by Adad; who satisfied the heart of Adad, the warrior, in Karkar, who restored the vessels for worship in E-ud-gal-gal; the king who granted life to the city of Adab; the guide of E-mach; the princely king of the city, the irresistible warrior, who granted life to the inhabitants of Mashkanshabri, and brought abundance to the temple of Shidlam; the White, Potent, who penetrated the secret cave of the bandits, saved the inhabitants of Malka from misfortune, and fixed their home fast in wealth; who established pure sacrificial gifts for Ea and Dam-gal-nun-na, who made his kingdom everlastingly great; the princely king of the city, who subjected the districts on the Ud-kib-nun-na Canal to the sway of Dagon, his Creator; who spared the inhabitants of Mera and Tutul; the sublime prince, who makes the face of Ninni shine; who presents holy meals to the divinity of Nin-a-zu, who cared for its inhabitants in their need, provided a portion for them in Babylon in peace; the shepherd of the oppressed and of the slaves; whose deeds find favor before Anunit, who provided for Anunit in the temple of Dumash in the suburb of Agade; who recognizes the right, who rules by law; who gave back to the city of Ashur its protecting god; who let the name of Ishtar of Nineveh remain in E-mish-mish; the Sublime, who humbles himself before the great gods; successor of Sumula-il; the mighty son of Sin-muballit; the royal scion of Eternity; the mighty monarch, the sun of Babylon, whose rays shed light over the land of Sumer and Akkad; the king, obeyed by the four quarters of the world; Beloved of Ninni, am I.

When Marduk sent me to rule over men, to give the protection of right to the land, I did right and righteousness in . . . , and brought about the well-being of the oppressed.

Procedural Law, 1 – 5:

1. If anyone ensnares another, putting a ban upon him, but he cannot prove it, then he that ensnared him shall be put to death.⁵

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.⁶

3. If anyone brings an accusation of any crime before the elders, and does not prove what he has charged, he shall, if it be a capital offense charged, be put to death.

4. If he satisfies the elders to impose a fine of grain or money, he shall receive the fine that the action produces.

5. If a judge tries a case, reaches a decision, and presents 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 judgement.⁷

Concerning Theft, 6 – 25:

6. If anyone steals the property of a temple or of the court, he shall be put to death, and also the one who receives the stolen thing from him shall be put to death.

7. If anyone buys from the son or the slave of another man, without witnesses or a contract, silver or gold, a male or female slave, an ox or a sheep, an ass or anything, or if he takes it in charge, he is considered a thief and shall be put to death.

8. If anyone steals cattle or sheep, or an ass, or a pig or a goat, if it belongs to a god or to the court, the thief shall pay thirty times the value; if they belonged to a freed man of the king he shall pay ten times the value; if the thief has nothing with which to pay he shall be put to death.

9. If anyone loses an article, and finds it in the possession of another: if the person in whose possession the thing is found says "A merchant sold it to me, I paid for it before witnesses," and if the owner of the thing says, "I will bring witnesses who know it to be my property," then shall the purchaser bring the merchant who sold it to him, and the witnesses before whom he bought it, and the owner shall bring witnesses who can identify his property. The judge shall examine their testimony - both of the witnesses before whom the price was

⁵ In this case, the word *ban* means to place someone outside the law – to declare that person a criminal. This is similar to modern laws against unlawful confinement or unlawful arrest.

⁶ The practice pre-dates Hammurabi by at least two centuries. The Sumerian law code of Ur-Nammu also indicated a trial by water: "If a man [accused (?)] another man of witchcraft (?), (and) he (the accused) was brought to the river of judgement by ordeal (and) the river of judgement by ordeal declared him innocent (?), the man who had been brought..... (lines 270-310(?))" (Kramer 1954, 48). The Trial by Ordeal, specifically the Trial by Water, was still in use in Europe into the 19th century. The variation was that a woman accused of witchcraft was thrown into the river; if she floated she was condemned as a witch, if she drowned she was deemed innocent.

⁷ The accountability of public officials was a standard in ancient law. Athenian law had similar provisions.

paid, and of the witnesses who identify the lost article on oath. If the merchant is then proved to be a thief he shall be put to death. The owner of the lost article receives his property, and he who bought it receives the money he paid from the estate of the merchant.

10. If the purchaser does not bring the merchant and the witnesses before whom he bought the article, but its owner brings witnesses who identify it, then the buyer is the thief and shall be put to death, and the owner receives the lost article.

11. If the owner does not bring witnesses to identify the lost article, he is an evil-doer, he is guilty of defamation, and shall be put to death.

12. If the witnesses are not available, then the judge shall set a limit, at the expiration of six months. If his witnesses have not appeared within the six months, he is an evil-doer, and shall bear the fine of the pending case.

14.⁸ If anyone steal the minor son of another, he shall be put to death.

15. If anyone takes a male or female slave of the court, or a male or female slave of a freed man, outside the city gates, he shall be put to death.

16. If anyone receives into his house a runaway male or female slave of the court, or of a freedman, and does not bring it out at the public proclamation of the court official⁹, the master of the house shall be put to death.

17. If anyone finds a runaway male or female slaves in the open country and brings them to their master, the master of the slaves shall pay him two shekels of silver.

18. If the slave will not give the name of the master, the finder shall bring him to the palace; a further investigation must follow, and the slave shall be returned to his master.

19. If he holds the slaves in his house, and they are caught there, he shall be put to death.

20. If the slave that he caught runs away from him, then shall he swear to the owners of the slave, and he is free of all blame.

21. If anyone breaks a hole into a house (breaks in to steal), he shall be put to death before that hole and be buried.

22. If anyone is committing a robbery and is caught, then he shall be put to death.

23. If the robber is not caught, then shall he who was robbed claim under oath the amount of his loss; then shall the community, and . . . on whose ground and territory and in whose domain it was compensate him for the goods stolen.¹⁰

24. If persons are stolen,¹¹ then shall the community and . . . pay one mina of silver to their relatives.

25. If fire breaks out in a house, and someone who comes to put it out casts his eye upon the property of the owner of the house, and takes the property of the master of the house, he shall be thrown into that self-same fire.

In Service to the King, 26 – 33:

26. If a chieftain or a man (common soldier), who has been ordered to go upon the king's highway for war does not go, but hires a mercenary, if he withholds the compensation, then

⁸ There is no 13th law, that number beint unluky and a harbinger of evil.

⁹ King has “major domus” here and other translations offer various terms, but the original is indefinite.

¹⁰ In the absence of anything like insurance companies, the community indemnifies its own members.

¹¹ That is to say, “if a person’s life has been taken...”

shall this officer or man be put to death, and he who represented him shall take possession of his house.¹²

27. If a chieftain or man be caught in the misfortune of the king (captured in battle), and if his fields and garden are given to another and that person takes possession, if the original owner returns and reaches his place, his field and garden shall be returned to him, he shall take it over again.

28. If a chieftain or a man is caught in the misfortune of a king, if his son is able to enter into possession, then the field and garden shall be given to him, he shall take over the fee of his father.

29. If his son is still young, and cannot take possession, a third of the field and garden shall be given to his mother, and she shall bring him up.

30. If a chieftain or a man leaves his house, garden and field and hires it out, and someone else takes possession of his house, garden and field and uses it for three years: if the first owner returns and claims his house, garden and field, it shall not be given to him, but he who has taken possession of it and used it shall continue to use it.¹³

31. If he hires it out for one year and then returns, the house, garden and field shall be given back to him, and he shall take it over again.

32. If a chieftain or a man is captured on the “Way of the King” (in war), and a merchant buys him free, and brings him back to his place; if he has the means in his house to buy his freedom, he shall buy himself free: if he has nothing in his house with which to buy himself free, he shall be bought free by the temple of his community; if there be nothing in the temple with which to buy him free, the court shall buy his freedom. His field, garden and house shall not be given for the purchase of his freedom.¹⁴

33. If a . . . or a . . . enters himself as withdrawn from the “Way of the King,” and sends a mercenary as substitute, but withdraws him, then the . . . or . . . shall be put to death.

[There is a large lacuna here]

Concerning Land, 34 – 65:

34. If a . . . or a . . . harms the property of a captain, injures the captain, or takes away from the captain a gift presented to him by the king, then the . . . or . . . shall be put to death.

35. If anyone buys the cattle or sheep which the king has given to chieftains from him, he loses his money.

¹² Every male citizen had the obligation to serve the king in times of war, but it was not uncommon for a man to hire a mercenary to take his place.

¹³ This is the concept of Squatter’s Rights, or Adverse Possession, and is the origin of the phrase, ‘possession is nine tenths of the law.’ See #44 below.

¹⁴ A clever innovation: Soldiers who were taken captive in war were usually and quickly sold to the slave traders who followed the army. Wealthy families could then buy their relatives back. Men from poor families would normally be taken to the slave markets as sold. By this law, these slave traders could return the soldiers to their homes and be compensated – perhaps even with some profit.

36. The field, garden and house of a chieftain, of a man, or of one subject to quit-rent, cannot be sold.¹⁵

37. If anyone buys the field, garden, and house of a chieftain, man, or one subject to quit-rent, his contract tablet of sale shall be broken (declared invalid) and he loses his money. The field, garden and house return to their owners.

38. A chieftain, man, or one subject to quit-rent cannot assign his tenure of field, house and garden to his wife or daughter, nor can he assign it for a debt.

39. He may, however, assign a field, garden, or house which he has bought, and holds as property, to his wife or daughter or give it for debt.

40. He may sell field, garden, and house to a merchant (royal agents) or to any other public official, the buyer holding field, house and garden for its usufruct.¹⁶

41. If anyone fences in the field, garden and house of a chieftain, man, or one subject to quit-rent, and supplies the materials for the fence; if the chieftain, man, or one subject to quit-rent returns to field, garden, and house, the materials which were used to build the fence become his property.¹⁷

42. If anyone takes over a field to till it, and obtains no harvest therefrom, it must be proved that he did no work on the field, and he must deliver grain, just as his neighbor raised, to the owner of the field.¹⁸

43. If he does not till the field, but lets it lie fallow, he shall give grain like his neighbor's to the owner of the field, and the field which he let lie fallow he must plow and sow and return to its owner.

44. If anyone takes over a waste-lying field to make it arable, but is lazy, and does not make it arable, he shall plow the fallow field in the fourth year, harrow it and till it, and give it back to its owner, and for each ten *gan*¹⁹ ten *gur*²⁰ of grain shall be paid.²¹

45. If a man rents his field for tillage for a fixed rental, and receives the rent of his field, but bad weather comes and destroys the harvest, the injury falls upon the tiller of the soil.

46. If he does not receive a fixed rental for his field, but lets it on half or third shares of the harvest, the grain on the field shall be divided proportionately between the tiller and the owner.

47. If the tiller, because he did not succeed in the first year, has had the soil tilled by others, the owner may raise no objection; the field has been cultivated and he receives the harvest according to agreement.

48. If anyone owes a debt for a loan, and a storm prostrates the grain, or the harvest fails, 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.

¹⁵ *Quit-rent* is a payment in lieu of required services. So, for example, if a farmer has paid the king cash in lieu of military service, that farmer is not permitted to sell his land.

¹⁶ Usufruct is the right to use and enjoy the produce of property without actually owning the property. It includes the stipulation that the property cannot be altered or damaged in any way.

¹⁷ That is to say that if a tenant pays for the construction of a fence on land he is renting, the fence becomes the property of the owner, not the renter.

¹⁸ Farmers often rent out their fields to others in exchange for a share of the harvest (see 46 below). Entering such an arrangement and then refusing to work the land would cost the tenant nothing but would harm the owner.

¹⁹ A measure of area.

²⁰ A *gur* is a measurement of volume equivalent to the amount an ass can carry.

²¹ See #30 above: possession of the land for three years does not constitute ownership if the land has not been worked.

49. If anyone takes money from a merchant, and gives the merchant a field tillable for corn²² or sesame and orders him to plant corn or sesame in the field, and to harvest the crop; if the cultivator plants corn or sesame in the field, at the harvest the corn or sesame that is in the field shall belong to the owner of the field and he shall pay corn as rent, for the money he received from the merchant, and the livelihood of the cultivator shall he give to the merchant.

50. If he gives a cultivated corn-field or a cultivated sesame-field, the corn or sesame in the field shall belong to the owner of the field, and he shall return the money to the merchant as rent.

51. If he has no money to repay, then he shall pay in corn or sesame in place of the money as rent for what he received from the merchant, according to the royal tariff.

52. If the cultivator does not plant corn or sesame in the field, the debtor's contract is not weakened.

53. If anyone is too lazy to keep his dam in proper condition, and does not so keep it; if then the dam breaks and all the fields are 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.²³

54. If he is not able to replace the corn, then he and his possessions shall be divided among the farmers whose corn he has flooded.

55. If anyone opens his ditches to water his crop, but is careless, and the water floods the field of his neighbor, then he shall pay his neighbor corn for his loss.

56. If a man lets in the water, and the water overflows the plantation of his neighbor, he shall pay ten *gur* of corn for every ten *gan* of land.

57. If a shepherd, without the permission of the owner of the field, and without the knowledge of the owner of the sheep, lets the sheep into a field to graze, then the owner of the field shall harvest his crop, and the shepherd, who had pastured his flock there without permission of the owner of the field, shall pay to the owner twenty *gur* of corn for every ten *gan*.

58. If after the flocks have left the pasture and been shut up in the common fold at the city gate, any shepherd lets them into a field and they graze there, this shepherd shall take possession of the field which he has allowed to be grazed on, and at the harvest he must pay sixty *gur* of corn for every ten *gan*.

59. If any man, without the knowledge of the owner of a garden, fells a tree in a garden he shall pay half a mina in money.

60. If anyone gives over a field to a gardener for him to plant it as a garden, if he works at it, and cares for it for four years, in the fifth year the owner and the gardener shall divide it, the owner taking his part in charge.

61. If the gardener has not completed the planting of the field, leaving one part unused, this shall be assigned to him as his.

²² In North America the term *corn* is used for the cereal crop *maize*. But properly speaking, *corn* simply refers to the dominant cereal crop of any region. Here, wheat or flax could be meant.

²³ To be sold into slavery for letting a dam break seems a harsh punishment, but the crime is of grave seriousness. the Tigris and Euphrates rivers flood in the spring, after the crops have been planted, and the fields had to be protected from the flood-waters. Allowing the flood-waters in could not only destroy that year's crop, but cause salination of the soil and spoil it for years to come.

62. If he does not plant the field that was given over to him as a garden, if it be arable land (for corn or sesame) the gardener shall pay the owner the produce of the field for the years that he let it lie fallow, according to the product of neighboring fields, put the field in arable condition and return it to its owner.

63. If he transforms waste land into arable fields and returns it to its owner, the latter shall pay him for one year ten *gur* for ten *gan*.

64. If anyone hands over his garden to a gardener to work, the gardener shall pay to its owner two-thirds of the produce of the garden, for so long as he has it in possession, and the other third shall he keep.

65. If the gardener does not work in the garden and the product falls off, the gardener shall pay in proportion to other neighboring gardens.

There is a large lacuna here, sections 66 – 99 are missing.

Concerning Merchants and Agents, 100 – 126:

100. . . . interest for the money, as much as he has received, he shall give a note therefor, and on the day, when they settle, pay to the merchant.

101. If there are no mercantile arrangements in the place where he went, he shall leave the entire amount of money which he received with the broker to give to the merchant.

102. If a merchant entrusts money to an agent (broker) for some investment, and the broker suffers a loss in the place to which he goes, he shall make good the capital to the merchant.

103. If, while on the journey, an enemy takes away from him anything that he had, the broker shall swear by God and be free of obligation.

104. If a merchant gives an agent corn, wool, oil, or any other goods to transport, the agent shall give a receipt for the amount, and compensate the merchant. Then he shall obtain a receipt from the merchant for the money that he gives the merchant.

105. If the agent is careless, and does not take a receipt for the money which he gave the merchant, he cannot consider the undocumented money as his own.

106. If the agent accepts money from the merchant, but has a quarrel with the merchant (denying the receipt), then shall the merchant swear before God and witnesses that he has given this money to the agent, and the agent shall pay him three times the sum.

107. If the merchant cheats the agent, in that as the latter has returned to him all that had been given him, but the merchant denies the receipt of what had been returned to him, then shall this agent convict the merchant before God and the judges, and if he still denies receiving what the agent had given him shall pay six times the sum to the agent.

108. If a tavern-keeper (feminine) does not accept corn according to gross weight in payment for 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.²⁴

109. If conspirators meet in the house of a tavern-keeper, and these conspirators are not captured and delivered to the court, the tavern-keeper shall be put to death.

²⁴ That is to say that a tavern-keeper is obligated to accept corn in payment. This law seems to indicate that a barter economy was still prevalent.

110. If a “sister of a god” opens a tavern, or enters a tavern to drink, then shall this woman be burned to death.

111. If an inn-keeper furnishes sixty ka of usakani-drink²⁵ to . . . she shall receive fifty ka of corn at the harvest.

112. If anyone goes on a journey and entrusts silver, gold, precious stones, or any movable property to another, and wishes to recover it from him; if the latter does not bring all of the property to the appointed place, but appropriates it to his own use, then shall this man, who did not bring the property to hand it over, be convicted, and he shall pay fivefold for all that had been entrusted to him.

113. If anyone has consignment of corn or money, and he takes from the granary or box without the knowledge of the owner, then shall he who took corn without the knowledge of the owner out of the granary or money out of the box be legally convicted, and repay the corn he has taken. And he shall lose whatever commission was paid to him, or due him.

114. If a man has no claim on another for corn and money, and tries to demand it by force, he shall pay one-third of a mina of silver in every case.

115. If anyone has a claim for corn or money upon another and imprisons him; if the prisoner dies in prison a natural death, the case shall go no further.

116. If the prisoner dies in prison from blows or maltreatment, the master of the prisoner shall convict the merchant before the judge. If he was a free-born man, the son of the merchant shall be put to death; if it was a slave, he shall pay one-third of a mina of gold, and all that the master of the prisoner gave he shall forfeit.

117. If anyone fails to meet a claim for debt, and sells himself, his wife, his son and daughter for money or gives them away to forced labor: they shall work for three years in the house of the man who bought them, or the proprietor, and in the fourth year they shall be set free.²⁶

118. If he gives a male or female slave away for forced labor, and the merchant subleases them, or sells them for money, no objection can be raised.

119. If anyone fails to meet a claim for debt, and he sells a female slave who has borne him children, for money, the money which the merchant has paid shall be repaid to him by the owner of the slave and she shall be freed.

120. If anyone stores corn for safe keeping in another person’s house, and any harm happens to the corn in storage, or if the owner of the house opens the granary and takes some of the corn, or if especially he denies that the corn was stored in his house: then the owner of the corn shall claim his corn before God (on oath), and the owner of the house shall pay its owner for all of the corn that he took.

121. If anyone stores corn in another man’s house he shall pay him storage at the rate of one *gur* for every five *ka* of corn per year.

122. If anyone gives 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.

²⁵ The beverage named here is unknown and even the rendering of the text has been disputed. One is wont to assume wine, but in a region where barley widely grown, beer is more likely. See Puhvel 2011.

²⁶ Debt-bondage was common, and problematic, throughout the ancient world. Solon of Athens is the first lawmaker we know of to prohibit the practice.

123. If he turns it over for safe keeping without witness or contract, and if he to whom it was given denies it, then he has no legitimate claim.

124. If anyone delivers silver, gold, or anything else to another for safe keeping, before a witness, but he denies it, he shall be brought before a judge, and all that he has denied he shall pay in full.

125. If anyone places 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.

126. If anyone who has not lost his goods states that he has lost, and makes false claims: if he claims his goods and amount of injury before God, even though he has not lost them, he shall be fully compensated for all his loss claimed.²⁷

Concerning Marriage, 127 - 167:

127. If anyone accuse or slanders a priestess or the wife of any one, and cannot prove it, this man shall be taken before the judges and his brow shall be marked.

128. If a man takes a woman to wife, but has no intercourse with her, this woman is no wife to him.

129. If a man's wife is caught in *flagrante delicto* with another man, both shall be tied and thrown into the water, but the husband may pardon his wife and the king his slaves.

130. If a man violates the wife (betrothed or child-wife) of another man, who has never known a man, and still lives in her father's house, and sleeps with her and be caught, this man shall be put to death, but the wife is blameless.

131. If a man brings a charge of adultery against one's wife, but she has not been caught in the act, she must take an oath and then may return to her house.

132. If the "finger is pointed" at a man's wife about another man, but she is not caught sleeping with the other man, she shall jump into the river for her husband.²⁸

133. If a man is taken prisoner in war, and there is a sustenance in his house, but his wife leaves house and court, and goes to another house: because this wife did not keep her court, and went to another house, she shall be judicially condemned and thrown into the water.

134. If anyone be captured in war and there is not sustenance in his house, if then his wife goes to another house this woman shall be held blameless.

135. If a man be taken prisoner in war and there be no sustenance in his house and his wife goes to another house and bears children; and if later her husband returns and comes to his home: then this wife shall return to her husband, but the children follow their father.²⁹

²⁷ This might seem odd. Does it not license fraud? Not in a culture where divine retribution is real. The person who swears an oath before God must be believed, and God will decide if the oath was false or not.

²⁸ See above, Section 2 and the footnote.

²⁹ 133 – 135 should be read in consideration of 32, above.

136. If anyone leaves his house, runs away, and then his wife goes to another house, if then he returns and wishes to take his wife back: because he fled from his home and ran away, the wife of this runaway shall not return to her husband.

137. If a man wishes to separate from a woman who has borne him children, or from his wife who has borne him children: then he shall give that wife her dowry, and a part of the usufruct of field, garden, and property, so that she can rear her children. When she has brought up her children, a portion of all that is given to the children, equal as that of one son, shall be given to her. She may then marry the man of her heart.

138. If a man wishes to separate from his wife who has borne him no children, he shall give her the amount of her purchase money and the dowry which she brought from her father's house, and let her go.

139. If there was no purchase price he shall give her one mina of gold as a gift of release.

140. If he be a freed man he shall give her one-third of a mina of gold.

141. If a man's wife, who lives in his house, wishes to leave it, plunges into debt, tries to ruin her house, neglects her husband, and is judicially convicted: if her husband offers her release, she may go on her way, and he gives her nothing as a gift of release. If her husband does not wish to release her, and if he takes another wife, she shall remain as servant in her husband's house.

142. If a woman quarrels with her husband, and says: "You are not congenial to me," the reasons for her prejudice must be presented. If she is guiltless, and there is no fault on her part, but he leaves and neglects her, then no guilt attaches to this woman, she shall take her dowry and go back to her father's house.

143. If she is not innocent, but leaves her husband, and ruins her house, neglecting her husband, this woman shall be cast into the water.

144. If a man takes a wife and this woman gives her husband a slave girl,³⁰ and she bears him children, but this man wishes to take another wife, this shall not be permitted to him; he shall not take a second wife.

145. If a man takes a wife, and she bears him no children, and he intends to take another wife: if he takes this second wife, and brings her into the house, this second wife shall not be allowed equality with his wife.

146. If a man takes a wife and she gives this man a slave girl as wife and she bears him children, and then this slave assumes equality with the wife: because she has borne him children her master shall not sell her for money, but he may keep her as a slave, reckoning her among the slave girls.

147. If she has not borne him children, then her mistress may sell her for money.

148. If a man takes a wife, and she be seized by disease, if he then desires 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.

149. If this woman does not wish to remain in her husband's house, then he shall compensate her for the dowry that she brought with her from her father's house, and she may go.

³⁰ King has "maid servant" but that is mild enough to be misleading. The test refers specifically to a female slave, the noun *amtu* here as in L15 and L16.

150. If a man gives his wife a field, garden, and house and a deed therefor, if then after the death of her husband the sons raise no claim, then the mother may bequeath all to one of her sons whom she prefers, and need leave nothing to his brothers.

151. If a woman who lived in a man's house made an agreement with her husband, that no creditor can arrest her, and has given a document therefor: if that man, before he married that woman, had a debt, the creditor cannot hold the woman for it. But if the woman, before she entered the man's house, had contracted a debt, her creditor cannot arrest her husband therefor.

152. If after the woman had entered the man's house, both contracted a debt, both must pay the merchant.

153. If the wife of one man on account of another man has their mates (her husband and the other man's wife) murdered, both of them shall be impaled.

154. If a man be guilty of incest with his daughter, he shall be driven from the place (exiled).

155. If a man betroths a girl to his son, and his son has intercourse with her, but he (the father) afterward defiles her and is caught in the act, then he shall be bound and cast into the water (drowned).

156. If a man betroths a girl to his son, but his son has not known her, and if then he defiles her, he shall pay her half a gold mina, and compensate her for all that she brought out of her father's house. She may marry the man of her heart.

157. If anyone is guilty of incest with his mother after his father, both shall be burned.

158. If anyone is caught *in flagrante delicto* with his father's chief wife, who has borne children, he shall be driven out of his father's house.

159. If anyone who has brought chattels into his father-in-law's house, and has paid the purchase-money, looks for another wife, and says to his father-in-law: "I do not want your daughter," the girl's father may keep all that he had brought.

160. If a man brings chattels into the house of his father-in-law, and pays the purchase price (for his wife): if then the father of the girl say: "I will not give you my daughter," he shall give him back all that he brought with him.

161. If a man brings chattels into his father-in-law's house and pays the purchase price, if then his friend slanders him, and his father-in-law says to the young husband: "You shall not marry my daughter," then he shall give back to him undiminished all that he had brought with him; but his wife shall not be married to the friend.

162. If a man marries a woman, and she bears sons to him; if then this woman dies, then shall her father have no claim on her dowry; this belongs to her sons.

163. If a man marries a woman and she bears him no sons; if then this woman dies, if the purchase price which he had paid into the house of his father-in-law is repaid to him, her husband shall have no claim upon the dowry of this woman; it belongs to her father's house.

164. If his father-in-law does not pay back to him the amount of the purchase price he may subtract the amount of the purchase price from the dowry, and then pay the remainder to her father's house.

165. If a man gives to one of his sons whom he prefers a field, garden and house, and a deed therefor: if later the father dies, and the brothers divide the estate, then they shall first

give him the present of his father, and he shall accept it; and the rest of the paternal property shall they divide.

166. If a man takes wives for his son, but takes no wife for his minor son, and if then he dies: if the sons divide the estate, they shall set aside besides his portion the money for the purchase price for the minor brother who had taken no wife as yet, and secure a wife for him.

167. If a man marries a wife and she bears him children: if this wife dies and he then takes another wife and she bears him children: if then the father dies, the sons must not partition the estate according to the mothers, they shall divide the dowries of their mothers only in this way; the paternal estate they shall divide equally with one another.

On Inheritance, 168 – 194:

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

169. If he is guilty of a grave fault, which should rightfully deprive him of the filial relationship, the father shall forgive him the first time; but if he is guilty of a grave fault a second time the father may deprive his son of all filial relation.

170. If his wife bears sons to a man, or his slave girl has borne sons, and the father while still living says to the children whom his slave girl has borne: "My sons," and he counts them with the sons of his wife; if then the father dies, then the sons of the wife and of the slave girl shall divide the paternal property in common. The son of the wife is to partition and choose.

171. If, however, the father while still living did not say to the sons of the slave girl: "My sons," and then the father dies, then the sons of the slave girl shall not share with the sons of the wife, but the freedom of the slave girl and her sons shall be granted. The sons of the wife shall have no right to enslave the sons of the slave girl; the wife shall take her dowry (from her father), and the gift that her husband gave her and deeded to her (separate from dowry, or the purchase-money paid her father), and live in the home of her husband: so long as she lives she shall use it, it shall not be sold for money. Whatever she leaves shall belong to her children.

172. If her husband made her no gift, she shall be compensated for her gift, and she shall receive a portion from the estate of her husband, equal to that of one child. If her sons oppress her, to force her out of the house, the judge shall examine into the matter, and if the sons are at fault the woman shall not leave her husband's house. If the woman desires to leave the house, she must leave to her sons the gift which her husband gave her, but she may take the dowry of her father's house. Then she may marry the man of her heart.

173. If this woman bears sons to her second husband, in the place to which she went, and then dies, her earlier and later sons shall divide the dowry between them.

174. If she bears no sons to her second husband, the sons of her first husband shall have the dowry.

175. If a State slave or the slave of a freed man marries the daughter of a free man, and children are born, the master of the slave shall have no right to enslave the children of the free.³¹

176. If, however, a State slave or the slave of a freed man marries a man's daughter, and after he marries her she brings a dowry from a father's house, if then they both enjoy it and found a household, and accumulate means, if then the slave dies, then she who was free-born may take her dowry, and all that her husband and she had earned; she shall divide them into two parts, one-half the master for the slave shall take, and the other half shall the free-born woman take for her children. If the free-born woman had no gift she shall take all that her husband and she had earned and divide it into two parts; and the master of the slave shall take one-half and she shall take the other for her children.

177. If a widow, whose children are not grown, wishes to enter another house (remarry), she shall not enter it without the knowledge of the judge. If she enter another house the judge shall examine the state of the house of her first husband. Then the house of her first husband shall be entrusted to the second husband and the woman herself as managers. And a record must be made thereof. She shall keep the house in order, bring up the children, and not sell the house-hold utensils. He who buys the utensils of the children of a widow shall lose his money, and the goods shall return to their owners.

178. If a "devoted woman" or a prostitute to whom her father has given a dowry and a deed therefor, but if in this deed it is not stated that she may bequeath it as she pleases, and has not explicitly stated that she has the right of disposal; if then her father dies, then her brothers shall hold her field and garden, and give her corn, oil, and milk according to her portion, and satisfy her. If her brothers do not give her corn, oil, and milk according to her share, then her field and garden shall support her. She shall have the usufruct of field and garden and all that her father gave her so long as she lives, but she cannot sell or assign it to others. Her position of inheritance belongs to her brothers.

179. If a "sister of a god," or a prostitute, receives a gift from her father, and a deed in which it has been explicitly stated that she may dispose of it as she pleases, and give her complete disposition thereof: if then her father dies, then she may leave her property to whomsoever she pleases. Her brothers can raise no claim thereto.

180. If a father gives a present to his daughter - either marriageable or a prostitute (unmarriageable) - and then dies, then she is to receive a portion as a child from the paternal estate, and enjoy its usufruct so long as she lives. Her estate belongs to her brothers.

181. If a father devotes a temple-maid or temple-virgin to God and gives her no present: if then the father dies, she shall receive the third of a child's portion from the inheritance of her father's house, and enjoy its usufruct so long as she lives. Her estate belongs to her brothers.

182. If a father devotes his daughter as a wife of Mardi of Babylon (as in 181), and gives her no present, nor a deed; if then her father dies, then shall she receive one-third of her portion as a child of her father's house from her brothers, but Marduk may leave her estate to whomsoever she wishes.

³¹ Certainly an interesting law! It means that free-born women were permitted to marry slaves, and vice versa. In order for this to happen we must assume that some men who were technically slaves actually enjoyed some status and wealth.

183. If a man gives his daughter by a concubine a dowry, and a husband, and a deed; if then her father dies, she shall receive no portion from the paternal estate.

184. If a man does not give a dowry to his daughter by a concubine, and no husband; if then her father dies, her brother shall give her a dowry according to her father's wealth and secure a husband for her.

185. If a man adopts a child and to his name as son, and rears him, this grown son cannot be demanded back again.

186. If a man adopts a son, and if after he has taken him he injures his foster father and mother, then this adopted son shall return to his father's house.

187. The son of a paramour in the palace service, or of a prostitute, cannot be demanded back.

188. If an artisan has undertaken to rear a child and teaches him his craft, he cannot be demanded back.

189. If he has not taught him his craft, this adopted son may return to his father's house.

190. If a man does not maintain a child that he has adopted as a son and reared with his other children, then his adopted son may return to his father's house.

191. If a man, who has adopted a son and reared him, founded a household, and had children, wishes to put this adopted son out, then this son shall not simply go his way. His adoptive father shall give him of his wealth one-third of a child's portion, and then he may go. He shall not give him of the field, garden, and house.

192. If a son of a paramour or a prostitute says to his adoptive father or mother: "You are not my father, or my mother," his tongue shall be cut off.

193. If the son of a paramour or a prostitute desires his father's house, and deserts his adoptive father and adoptive mother, and goes to his father's house, then shall his eye be put out.

194. If a man gives his child to a nurse and the child dies in her hands, but the nurse unbeknown to the father and mother nurses another child, then they shall convict her of having nursed another child without the knowledge of the father and mother and her breasts shall be cut off.

Concerning Injury, 195 – 214:

195. If a son strikes his father, his hands shall be hewn off.

196. If a man puts out the eye of another man, his eye shall be put out.

197. If he breaks another man's bone, his bone shall be broken.

198. If he puts out the eye of a freed man, or breaks the bone of a freed man, he shall pay one gold 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 knocks out the teeth of his equal, his teeth shall be knocked out.

201. If he knocks out the teeth of a freed man, he shall pay one-third of a gold mina.

202. If any one strike the body of a man higher in rank than he, he shall receive sixty blows with an ox-whip in public.

203. If a free-born man strike the body of another free-born man or equal rank, he shall pay one gold mina.

204. If a freed man strike the body of another freed man, he shall pay ten shekels in money.

205. If the slave of a freed man strikes the body of a freed man, his ear shall be cut off.

206. If during a quarrel one man strikes another and wounds him, then he shall swear, "I did not injure him wittingly" and pay the physicians.

207. If the man dies of his wound, he shall swear similarly, and if he (the deceased) was a free-born man, he shall pay half a mina in money.

208. If he was a freed man, he shall pay one-third of a mina.

209. If a man strikes a free-born woman so that she loses her unborn child, he shall pay ten shekels for her loss.

210. If the woman dies, his daughter shall be put to death.

211. If a woman of the free class loses her child by a blow, he shall pay five shekels in money.

212. If this woman dies, he shall pay half a mina.

213. If he strikes the slave girl of a man, and she loses her child, he shall pay two shekels in money.

214. If this slave girl dies, he shall pay one-third of a mina.

Concerning medical procedures, 215 – 227:

215. If a physician makes a large incision with an operating knife and cures it, or if he opens a tumor (over the eye) with an operating knife, and saves the eye, he shall receive ten shekels in money.

216. If the patient is a freed man, he receives five shekels.

217. If he is the slave of someone, his owner shall give the physician two shekels.

218. If a physician makes a large incision with the operating knife, and kills him, or opens a tumor with the operating knife, and cuts out the eye, his hands shall be cut off.

219. If a physician makes a large incision in the slave of a freed man, and kills him, he shall replace the slave with another slave.

220. If he had opened a tumor with the operating knife, and put out his eye, he shall pay half his value.

221. If a physician heals the broken bone or diseased soft part of a man, the patient shall pay the physician five shekels in money.

222. If he were a freed man he shall pay three shekels.

223. If he were a slave his owner shall pay the physician two shekels.

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

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

226. If a barber, without the knowledge of his master, cuts the sign of a slave on a slave not to be sold, the hands of this barber shall be cut off.

227. If an one deceives a barber, and has him mark a slave not for sale with the sign of a slave, he shall be put to death, and buried in his house. The barber shall swear: "I did not mark him wittingly," and shall be guiltless.

Concerning houses, 228 – 233:

228. If a builder builds a house for someone and completes it, he shall give him a fee of two shekels in money for each sar of surface.

229. If a builder builds a house for someone, and does not construct it properly, and the house which he built falls in and kills its owner, then that builder shall be put to death.

230. If it kills the son of the owner, the son of that builder shall be put to death.

231. If it kills a slave of the owner, then he shall pay slave for slave to the owner of the house.

232. If it ruins goods, he shall make compensation for all that has been ruined, and inasmuch as he did not construct properly this house which he built and it fell, he shall re-erect the house from his own means.

233. If a builder builds a house for someone, 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.

Concerning ships, 234 – 240:

234. If a shipbuilder builds a boat of sixty gur for a man, he shall pay him a fee of two shekels in money.

235. If a shipbuilder builds a boat for someone, and does not make it tight, if during that same year that boat is sent away and suffers injury, the shipbuilder shall take the boat apart and put it together tight at his own expense. The tight boat he shall give to the boat owner.

236. If a man rents his boat to a sailor, and the sailor is careless, and the boat is wrecked or goes aground, the sailor shall give the owner of the boat another boat as compensation.

237. If a man hires a sailor and his boat, and provides it with corn, clothing, oil and dates, and other things of the kind needed for fitting it: if the sailor is careless, the boat is wrecked, and its contents ruined, then the sailor shall compensate for the boat which was wrecked and all in it that he ruined.

238. If a sailor wrecks any one's ship, but saves it, he shall pay the half of its value in money.

239. If a man hires a sailor, he shall pay him six gur of corn per year.

240. If a merchantman runs against a ferryboat, and wrecks it, the master of the ship that was wrecked shall seek justice before God; the master of the merchantman, which wrecked the ferryboat, must compensate the owner for the boat and all that he ruined.

Fixed Penalties, 241 – 282:

241. If anyone impresses an ox for forced labor, he shall pay one-third of a mina in money.

242. If anyone hires oxen for a year, he shall pay four gur of corn for plow-oxen.

243. As rent of herd cattle he shall pay three gur of corn to the owner.

244. If anyone hires an ox or an ass, and a lion kills it in the field, the loss is upon its owner.

245. If anyone hires oxen, and kills them by bad treatment or blows, he shall compensate the owner, oxen for oxen.

246. If a man hires an ox, and he breaks its leg or cuts the ligament of its neck, he shall compensate the owner with ox for ox.

247. If anyone hires an ox, and puts out its eye, he shall pay the owner one-half of its value.

248. If anyone hires an ox, and breaks off a horn, or cuts off its tail, or hurts its muzzle, he shall pay one-fourth of its value in money.

249. If anyone hires an ox, and God strikes it that it dies, the man who hired it shall swear by God and be considered guiltless.

250. If while an ox is passing on the street (market) someone pushes it, and kills it, the owner can set up no claim in the suit (against the hirer).

251. If an ox is a goring ox, and it is shown that he is a gorer, and he does not bind his horns, or fasten the ox up, and the ox gores a free-born man and kills him, the owner shall pay one-half a mina in money.

252. If he kills a man's slave, he shall pay one-third of a mina.

253. If anyone agrees with another to tend his field, gives him seed, entrusts a yoke of oxen to him, and binds him to cultivate the field, if he steals the corn or plants, and takes them for himself, his hands shall be hewn off.

254. If he takes the seed-corn for himself, and does not use the yoke of oxen, he shall compensate him for the amount of the seed-corn.

255. If he sublets the man's yoke of oxen or steals the seed-corn, planting nothing in the field, he shall be convicted, and for each one hundred *gan* he shall pay sixty *gur* of corn.

256. If his community will not pay for him, then he shall be placed in that field with the cattle (at work).

257. If anyone hires a field laborer, he shall pay him eight *gur* of corn per year.

258. If anyone hires an ox-driver, he shall pay him six *gur* of corn per year.

259. If anyone steals a water-wheel from the field, he shall pay five shekels in money to its owner.

260. If anyone steals a shadduf (used to draw water from the river or canal) or a plow, he shall pay three shekels in money.

261. If anyone hires a herdsman for cattle or sheep, he shall pay him eight *gur* of corn per annum.

262. If anyone, a cow or a sheep . . .

263. If he kills the cattle or sheep that were given to him, he shall compensate the owner with cattle for cattle and sheep for sheep.

264. If a herdsman, to whom cattle or sheep have been entrusted for watching over, and who has received his wages as agreed upon, and is satisfied, diminishes the number of the cattle or sheep, or make the increase by birth less, he shall make good the increase or profit which was lost in the terms of settlement.

265. If a herdsman, to whose care cattle or sheep have been entrusted, is guilty of fraud and makes false returns of the natural increase, or sells them for money, then shall he be convicted and pay the owner ten times the loss.

266. If the animal is killed in the stable by God (an accident), or if a lion kills it, the herdsman shall declare his innocence before God, and the owner bears the accident in the stable.

267. If the herdsman overlooks something, and an accident happens in the stable, then the herdsman is at fault for the accident which he has caused in the stable, and he must compensate the owner for the cattle or sheep.

268. If anyone hires an ox for threshing, the amount of the hire is twenty *ka* of corn.

269. If he hires an ass for threshing, the hire is twenty *ka* of corn.

270. If he hires a young animal for threshing, the hire is ten *ka* of corn.

271. If anyone hires oxen, cart and driver, he shall pay one hundred and eighty *ka* of corn per day.

272. If anyone hires a cart alone, he shall pay forty *ka* of corn per day.

273. If anyone hires a day laborer, he shall pay him from the New Year until the fifth month (April to August, when days are long and the work hard) six *gerahs* in money per day; from the sixth month to the end of the year he shall give him five *gerahs* per day.

274. If anyone hires a skilled artisan, he shall pay as wages of the . . . five *gerahs*, as wages of the potter five *gerahs*, of a tailor five *gerahs*, of . . . *gerahs*, . . . of a rope-maker four *gerahs*, of . . . *gerahs*, of a mason . . . *gerahs* per day.

275. If anyone hires a ferryboat, he shall pay three *gerahs* in money per day.

276. If he hires a freight-boat, he shall pay two and one-half *gerahs* per day.

277. If anyone hire a ship of sixty *gur*, he shall pay one-sixth of a shekel in money as its hire per day.

278. If anyone buys a male or female slave, and before a month has elapsed the *benu*-disease is developed, he shall return the slave to the seller, and receive the money which he had paid.

279. If anyone buys a male or female slave, and a third party claims it, the seller is liable for the claim.

280. If while in a foreign country a man buys a male or female slave belonging to another of his own country; if when he returns home the owner of the male or female slave recognizes it: if the male or female slave is a native of the country, he shall give them back without any money.

281. If it is from another country, the buyer shall declare the amount of money paid therefor to the merchant, and keep the male or female slave.

282. If a slave says to his master: "You are not my master," if they convict him his master shall cut off his ear.

Epilogue:

Laws of justice which Hammurabi, the wise king, established. A righteous law, and pious statute did he teach the land. Hammurabi, the protecting king am I. I have not withdrawn myself from the men, whom Bel gave to me, the rule over whom Marduk gave to me, I was

not negligent, but I made them a peaceful abiding-place. I expounded all great difficulties, I made the light shine upon them. With the mighty weapons which Zamama and Ishtar entrusted to me, with the keen vision with which Ea endowed me, with the wisdom that Marduk gave me, I have uprooted the enemy above and below (in north and south), subdued the earth, brought prosperity to the land, guaranteed security to the inhabitants in their homes; a disturber was not permitted. The great gods have called me, I am the salvation-bearing shepherd, whose staff is straight, the good shadow that is spread over my city; on my breast I cherish the inhabitants of the land of Sumer and Akkad; in my shelter I have let them repose in peace; in my deep wisdom have I enclosed them. That the strong might not injure the weak, in order to protect the widows and orphans, I have in Babylon the city where Anu and Bel raise high their head, in E-Sagil, the Temple, whose foundations stand firm as heaven and earth, in order to bespeak justice in the land, to settle all disputes, and heal all injuries, set up these my precious words, written upon my memorial stone, before the image of me, as king of righteousness.

The king who rules among the kings of the cities am I. My words are well considered; there is no wisdom like unto mine. By the command of Shamash, the great judge of heaven and earth, let righteousness go forth in the land: by the order of Marduk, my lord, let no destruction befall my monument. In E-Sagil, which I love, let my name be ever repeated; let the oppressed, who has a case at law, come and stand before this my image as king of righteousness; let him read the inscription, and understand my precious words: the inscription will explain his case to him; he will find out what is just, and his heart will be glad, so that he will say:

“Hammurabi is a ruler, who is as a father to his subjects, who holds the words of Marduk in reverence, who has achieved conquest for Marduk over the north and south, who rejoices the heart of Marduk, his lord, who has bestowed benefits for ever and ever on his subjects, and has established order in the land.”

When he reads the record, let him pray with full heart to Marduk, my lord, and Zarpanit, my lady; and then shall the protecting deities and the gods, who frequent E-Sagil, graciously grant the desires daily presented before Marduk, my lord, and Zarpanit, my lady. In future time, through all coming generations, let the king, who may be in the land, observe the words of righteousness which I have written on my monument; let him not alter the law of the land which I have given, the edicts which I have enacted; my monument let him not mar. If such a ruler have wisdom, and be able to keep his land in order, he shall observe the words which I have written in this inscription; the rule, statute, and law of the land which I have given; the decisions which I have made will this inscription show him; let him rule his subjects accordingly, speak justice to them, give right decisions, root out the miscreants and criminals from this land, and grant prosperity to his subjects.

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. If a succeeding ruler considers my words, which I have written in this my inscription, if he do not annul my law, nor corrupt my words, nor change my monument, then may Shamash lengthen that king's reign, as he has that of me, the king of righteousness, that he may reign in righteousness over his subjects. If this ruler do not esteem my words, which I have written in my inscription, if he despise

my curses, and fear not the curse of God, if he destroy the law which I have given, corrupt my words, change my monument, efface my name, write his name there, or on account of the curses commission another so to do, that man, whether king or ruler, patesi, or commoner, no matter what he be, may the great God (Anu), the Father of the gods, who has ordered my rule, withdraw from him the glory of royalty, break his scepter, curse his destiny. May Bel, the lord, who fixes destiny, whose command cannot be altered, who has made my kingdom great, order a rebellion which his hand cannot control; may he let the wind of the overthrow of his habitation blow, may he ordain the years of his rule in groaning, years of scarcity, years of famine, darkness without light, death with seeing eyes be fated to him; may he (Bel) order with his potent mouth the destruction of his city, the dispersion of his subjects, the cutting off of his rule, the removal of his name and memory from the land. May Belit, the great Mother, whose command is potent in E-Kur (the Babylonian Olympus), the Mistress, who harkens graciously to my petitions, in the seat of judgment and decision (where Bel fixes destiny), turn his affairs evil before Bel, and put the devastation of his land, the destruction of his subjects, the pouring out of his life like water into the mouth of King Bel. May Ea, the great ruler, whose fated decrees come to pass, the thinker of the gods, the omniscient, who makes long the days of my life, withdraw understanding and wisdom from him, lead him to forgetfulness, shut up his rivers at their sources, and not allow corn or sustenance for man to grow in his land. May Shamash, the great Judge of heaven and earth, who supports all means of livelihood, Lord of life-courage, shatter his dominion, annul his law, destroy his way, make vain the march of his troops, send him in his visions forecasts of the uprooting of the foundations of his throne and of the destruction of his land. May the condemnation of Shamash overtake him forthwith; may he be deprived of water above among the living, and his spirit below in the earth. May Sin (the Moon-god), the Lord of Heaven, the divine father, whose crescent gives light among the gods, take away the crown and regal throne from him; may he put upon him heavy guilt, great decay, that nothing may be lower than he. May he destine him as fated, days, months and years of dominion filled with sighing and tears, increase of the burden of dominion, a life that is like unto death. May Adad, the lord of fruitfulness, ruler of heaven and earth, my helper, withhold from him rain from heaven, and the flood of water from the springs, destroying his land by famine and want; may he rage mightily over his city, and make his land into flood-hills (heaps of ruined cities). May Zamama, the great warrior, the first-born son of E-Kur, who goes at my right hand, shatter his weapons on the field of battle, turn day into night for him, and let his foe triumph over him. May Ishtar, the goddess of fighting and war, who unfetters my weapons, my gracious protecting spirit, who loves my dominion, curse his kingdom in her angry heart; in her great wrath, change his grace into evil, and shatter his weapons on the place of fighting and war. May she create disorder and sedition for him, strike down his warriors, that the earth may drink their blood, and throw down the piles of corpses of his warriors on the field; may she not grant him a life of mercy, deliver him into the hands of his enemies, and imprison him in the land of his enemies. May Nergal, the might among the gods, whose contest is irresistible, who grants me victory, in his great might burn up his subjects like a slender reedstalk, cut off his limbs with his mighty weapons, and shatter him like an earthen image. May Nin-tu, the sublime mistress of the lands, the fruitful mother, deny him a son, vouchsafe him no name, give him no successor among men. May Nin-karak,

the daughter of Anu, who adjudges grace to me, cause to come upon his members in E-kur high fever, severe wounds, that cannot be healed, whose nature the physician does not understand, which he cannot treat with dressing, which, like the bite of death, cannot be removed, until they have sapped away his life.

May he lament the loss of his life-power, and may the great gods of heaven and earth, the Anunaki, altogether inflict a curse and evil upon the confines of the temple, the walls of this E-barra (the Sun temple of Sippara), upon his dominion, his land, his warriors, his subjects, and his troops. May Bel curse him with the potent curses of his mouth that cannot be altered, and may they come upon him forthwith.