

## The Code of Hammurabi



**ABOUT THE READING:** In the 18th or 19th century, archaeologists found the huge Babylonian Empire, which covered all of Mesopotamia. Hammurabi is famous for his code of laws—a collection of 282 rules that cover many topics. They were written down so that all members of the empire could read and obey them.

### GLOSSARY

**by** from, contains  
**court** royal palace  
**contract** signed document  
**grain** wheat; grain is stored  
**negotiate** communicate



As you read about other laws, some of these laws were especially important to the water farmers living along the river of ancient Mesopotamia.

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

11. If any one steal the property of a temple or of the crown, he shall be put to death, and also the one who receives the stolen thing from him shall be put to death.

12. If any one bring from the city or the land of another man, without witness, a ox, a donkey, a mule, a male or female slave, an ox or a sheep [a donkey] or anything . . . he is considered a thief and shall be put to death.

13. If any one let his lay to keep his slave in proper condition, and does not so keep it, if then the slave breaks and all the fields be flooded, then shall he be as whose slave he breaks [broken] . . . replace the **gag**, which he has caused to be ruined.

These explain what happens if a judge is found to have made a mistake in a case.

These provisions, such as having slaves, donkeys, or oxen, required a witness or witnesses. Without a witness or witnesses, the provisions were considered theft and the penalty was death.

Source: The Code of Hammurabi, translated by John Van Dinter, 1902. <http://www.ancienthistorysource.com/hammurabi.htm>