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Ideals of Hammurabi’s Babylon

Today we live in a world where we are surrounded by laws and certain codes of conduct. Over the centuries, we have heard of the upbringing of different types of justice systems and laws, but do we ever wonder why people come up with them? Some of these certain laws are coming to light, helping us get the gist of what type of situation the community and/or society was in when said laws were created. Going back to the eighteenth century in Mesopotamia civilization, where Hammurabi (r. ca. 1792 -1750) united the society thorough a sort of justice system.

Hammurabi was looking for a way to restore and establish a system where people were given a chance at righteousness. Women seemed to have just as much, maybe even more, importance to the society as to men. Most of the laws regarding marriage, have a rather fair consequence towards men and women both during that time period, for example, if a woman was being mistreated by her husband, she was allowed to go back to her family. Men and women were both granted to leave their spouses with good reason like most unhappy married couples would do today. The main idea of the marriage and the family portion of Hammurabi’s was to be loyal to your loved one and do not betray them.

Betrayal and loyalty was not the only thing that Hammurabi’s code covered, being in the wrong was a concept used in The Administration of Justice. The consequences concerning this section involved a lot of cruel punishment and death penalties. Even judges who gave a decision on a case was found in the wrong he was convicted because of misjudgment and given the penalty of paying twelve times the penalty awarded from the misjudged case. Being proved wrong in a lawsuit mostly resulted in death probably causing people to stay out of the wrong and doing well for the society. Hammurabi probably had such cruel punishments to reduce chaos in Mesopotamia and unit the community into doing well.

Hammurabi looked out for the well-being of his people and made sure if they were hurt in any way because of someone else he would make sure that said person would get punished. The codes of Personal Injury focused on the violence inflicted on others and punishment towards the person who caused it. For example, if a son hit his father, he would pay by having his hands cut off. Such crucial punishing occurred due to the fact that someone caused pain towards someone else. The point of those specific codes were to help reduce the evil acts of violence committed on people and establish some kind of peace.

Protection was another concept that proved to be an important principle in the code. Physicians suffered consequences if they injured and/or a man while performing surgery and builders also suffered consequences if their creation killed someone. Giving that their jobs were to protect and help others while failing to do so Hammurabi believed that they had to in some way had to pay for not keeping their word. Besides the consequences, if they had done their job right without killing or injuring anyone they were rewarded with silver as a payment. The purpose of the whole protection concept was make sure that people were not in harm’s way

The aspects of Property seemed to have a fair judgement concerning how it was dealt with. The codes towards property appeared less crucial than most of the codes with that hold very harsh consequences. The property codes are a little more directed towards men than women since they weren’t allowed to have their property when their spouse passes away but if they had an underage son she was allowed only a third of the property. Only on paper could a man give his wife or daughter property, while his son is given all of it when he was of age. Property was an idea of what you own is something that should be passed down generations and given away when needed.

The consequences given to people deemed acceptable appeared to be extremely barbaric but considering the time period it was not seen that way but since the consequences were very crucial people stay in the right and did what they needed to do in order to avoid said consequences. Unfortunately, some of the acts committed could have been completely accidental resulted in some builders and physicians being put to death without sympathy because they failed to do what they were supposed to which is looked at as unfair but since there was not a reasonable justice system around people just agreed. Even though the code was to prevent citizens from doing such heinous crimes, the consequences could be considered even more wicked than the original crime which contradicts the whole purpose of the codes. Some people were granted a fair judgement/trial where they were given a chance to prove themselves not guilty but if his word is not justified he would be put to death. These consequences were enforced to stop people from performing unacceptable offenses and rethink if committing said acts is worth the time and penalty it may cause if they decided to go forward with it and disobey the code.

Hammurabi’s code was something that he wanted people to follow in order to have a good and stable society. The codes were a way for people to consider doing something good and caring for the well-being of others instead of committing terrible crimes/acts. Hammurabi wanted the code to stay the same and people to follow it by heart through generations. Those who followed his words, he believed would live as long as he did and bring justice to his society. If changed, he felt that it was wrong and not meant for any altering to be done to what he meant but if they did alter some of the codes then they should follow their word as long as they do it for the good of the land and society. His principles came from wanting people to not practice in “evil” acts and establishing what he thought equality was. Being a good person was basically what the code was telling people to do and if you obeyed without breaking any of those codes you would be just that.