

= Hammurabi =

Hammurabi (c . 1810 BC - 1750 BC) was the sixth king of the First Babylonian Dynasty , reigning from 1792 BC to 1750 BC (according to the Middle Chronology) . He was preceded by his father , Sin @-@ Muballit , who abdicated due to failing health . He extended Babylon 's control throughout Mesopotamia through military campaigns . Hammurabi is known for the Code of Hammurabi , one of the earliest surviving codes of law in recorded history . The name Hammurabi derives from the Amorite term ?Ammur?pi (" the kinsman is a healer ") , itself from ?Ammu (" paternal kinsman ") and R?pi (" healer ") .

= = Reign and conquests = =

Hammurabi was an Amorite First Dynasty king of the city @-@ state of Babylon , and inherited the power from his father , Sin @-@ Muballit , in c . 1792 BC . Babylon was one of the many largely Amorite ruled city @-@ states that dotted the central and southern Mesopotamian plains and waged war on each other for control of fertile agricultural land . Though many cultures co @-@ existed in Mesopotamia , Babylonian culture gained a degree of prominence among the literate classes throughout the Middle East under Hammurabi . The kings who came before Hammurabi had founded a relatively minor City State in 1894 BC which controlled little territory outside of the city itself . Babylon was overshadowed by older , larger and more powerful kingdoms such as Elam , Assyria , Isin , Eshnunna and Larsa for a century or so after its founding . However his father Sin @-@ Muballit had begun to consolidate rule of a small area of south central Mesopotamia under Babylonian hegemony and , by the time of his reign , had conquered the minor city @-@ states of Borsippa , Kish , and Sippar .

Thus Hammurabi ascended to the throne as the king of a minor kingdom in the midst of a complex geopolitical situation . The powerful kingdom of Eshnunna controlled the upper Tigris River while Larsa controlled the river delta . To the east of Mesopotamia lay the powerful kingdom of Elam which regularly invaded and forced tribute upon the small states of southern Mesopotamia . In northern Mesopotamia , the Assyrian king Shamshi @-@ Adad I , who had already inherited centuries old Assyrian colonies in Asia Minor , had expanded his territory into the Levant and central Mesopotamia , although his untimely death would somewhat fragment his empire .

The first few decades of Hammurabi 's reign were quite peaceful . Hammurabi used his power to undertake a series of public works , including heightening the city walls for defensive purposes , and expanding the temples . In c . 1801 BC , the powerful kingdom of Elam , which straddled important trade routes across the Zagros Mountains , invaded the Mesopotamian plain . With allies among the plain states , Elam attacked and destroyed the kingdom of Eshnunna , destroying a number of cities and imposing its rule on portions of the plain for the first time . In order to consolidate its position , Elam tried to start a war between Hammurabi 's Babylonian kingdom and the kingdom of Larsa . Hammurabi and the king of Larsa made an alliance when they discovered this duplicity and were able to crush the Elamites , although Larsa did not contribute greatly to the military effort . Angered by Larsa 's failure to come to his aid , Hammurabi turned on that southern power , thus gaining control of the entirety of the lower Mesopotamian plain by c . 1763 BC .

As Hammurabi was assisted during the war in the south by his allies from the north such as Yamhad and Mari , the absence of soldiers in the north led to unrest . Continuing his expansion , Hammurabi turned his attention northward , quelling the unrest and soon after crushing Eshnunna . Next the Babylonian armies conquered the remaining northern states , including Babylon 's former ally Mari , although it is possible that the ' conquest ' of Mari was a surrender without any actual conflict .

Hammurabi entered into a protracted war with Ishme @-@ Dagan I of Assyria for control of Mesopotamia , with both kings making alliances with minor states in order to gain the upper hand . Eventually Hammurabi prevailed , ousting Ishme @-@ Dagan I just before his own death . Mut @-@ Ashkur the new king of Assyria was forced to pay tribute to Hammurabi , however Babylon did not rule Assyria directly .

In just a few years , Hammurabi had succeeded in uniting all of Mesopotamia under his rule . The Assyrian kingdom survived but was forced to pay tribute during his reign , and of the major city @-@ states in the region , only Aleppo and Qatna to the west in the Levant maintained their independence . However , one stele of Hammurabi has been found as far north as Diyarbekir , where he claims the title " King of the Amorites " .

Vast numbers of contract tablets , dated to the reigns of Hammurabi and his successors , have been discovered , as well as 55 of his own letters . These letters give a glimpse into the daily trials of ruling an empire , from dealing with floods and mandating changes to a flawed calendar , to taking care of Babylon 's massive herds of livestock . Hammurabi died and passed the reins of the empire on to his son Samsu @-@ iluna in c . 1750 BC , under whose rule the Babylonian empire began to quickly unravel .

= = Code of laws = =

The Code of Hammurabi was inscribed on a stele and placed in a public place so that all could see it , although it is thought that few were literate . The stele was later plundered by the Elamites and removed to their capital , Susa ; it was rediscovered there in 1901 in Iran and is now in the Louvre Museum in Paris . The code of Hammurabi contained 282 laws , written by scribes on 12 tablets . Unlike earlier laws , it was written in Akkadian , the daily language of Babylon , and could therefore be read by any literate person in the city .

The structure of the code is very specific , with each offense receiving a specified punishment . The punishments tended to be very harsh by modern standards , with many offenses resulting in death , disfigurement , or the use of the " Eye for eye , tooth for tooth " (Lex Talionis " Law of Retaliation ") philosophy . The code is also one of the earliest examples of the idea of presumption of innocence , and it also suggests that the accused and accuser have the opportunity to provide evidence . However , there is no provision for extenuating circumstances to alter the prescribed punishment .

A carving at the top of the stele portrays Hammurabi receiving the laws from the god Shamash or possibly Marduk , and the preface states that Hammurabi was chosen by the gods of his people to bring the laws to them . Parallels between this narrative and the giving of laws by God in Jewish tradition to Moses and similarities between the two legal codes suggest a common ancestor in the Semitic background of the two . Fragments of previous law codes have been found . However David P. Wright argues that the Covenant Code of the Biblical Book of Exodus is ' directly , primarily , and throughout ' based upon the Laws of Hammurabi .

Similar codes of law were created in several nearby civilizations , including the earlier Mesopotamian examples of Ur @-@ Nammu 's code , Laws of Eshnunna , and Code of Lipit @-@ Ishtar , and the later Hittite code of laws .

= = = Example laws in Hammurabi 's code = = =

(Text taken from Harper 's translation , readable on wikisource)

§ 8 ? If any one steal cattle or sheep , or an ass , or a pig or a goat , if it belong to a god or to the court , the thief shall pay thirtyfold therefor ; if they belonged to a freed man of the king he shall pay tenfold ; if the thief has nothing with which to pay he shall be put to death .

§ 21 ? If a man make a breach in a house , they shall put him to death in front of that breach and they shall thrust him therein .

§ 55 ? If a man open his canal for irrigation and neglect it and the water carry away an adjacent field , he shall measure out grain on the basis of the adjacent fields .

§ 59 ? If a man cut down a tree in a man 's orchard , without the consent of the owner of the orchard , he shall pay one @-@ half mina of silver .

§ 168 ? If a man set his face to disinherit his son and say to the judges : " I will disinherit my son , " the judges shall inquire into his antecedents , and if the son have not committed a crime sufficiently grave to cut him off from sonship , the father may not cut off his son from sonship .

§ 169 ? If he have committed a crime against his father sufficiently grave to cut him off from sonship

, they shall condone his first (offense) . If he commit a crime a second time , the father may cut off his son from sonship .

§ 195 ? If a son strike his father , they shall cut off his fingers .

§ 196 ? 201 ? If a man destroy the eye of another man , they shall destroy his eye . If one break a man 's bone , they shall break his bone . If one destroy the eye of a freeman or break the bone of a freeman he shall pay one mana of silver . If one destroy the eye of a man 's slave or break a bone of a man 's slave he shall pay one @-@ half his price . If a man knock out a tooth of a man of his own rank , they shall knock out his tooth . If one knock out a tooth of a freeman , he shall pay one @-@ third mana of silver .

§ 218 ? 219 ? If a physician operate on a man for a severe wound with a bronze lancet and cause that man 's death ; or open an abscess (in the eye) of a man with a bronze lancet and destroy the man 's eye , they shall cut off his fingers . If a physician operate on a slave of a freeman for a severe wound with a bronze lancet and cause his death , he shall restore a slave of equal value .

§ 229 ? 232 ? If a builder build a house for a man and do not make its construction firm , and the house which he has built collapse and cause the death of the owner of the house , that builder shall be put to death . If it cause the death of a son of the owner of the house , they shall put to death a son of that builder . If it cause the death of a slave of the owner of the house , he shall give the owner of the house a slave of equal value . If it destroy property , he shall restore whatever it destroyed , and because he did not make the house which he built firm and it collapsed , he shall rebuild the house which collapsed from his own property (i.e. , at his own expense) .

= = Legacy and depictions = =

During his reign Babylon usurped the position of " most holy city " in southern Mesopotamia from its predecessor , Nippur , for the final time (Babylon had also previously enjoyed this status under the Akkadians , before it was restored to Nippur in the " Sumerian renaissance ") .

Under the rule of Hammurabi 's successor Samsu @-@ iluna , the short @-@ lived Babylonian Empire began to collapse . In northern Mesopotamia , both the Amorites and Babylonians were driven from Assyria by Puzur @-@ Sin a native Akkadian @-@ speaking ruler , circa 1740 BC . Around the same time , native Akkadian speakers threw off Amorite Babylonian rule in the far south of Mesopotamia , creating the Sealand Dynasty , in more or less the region of ancient Sumer . Hammurabi 's ineffectual successors met with further defeats and loss of territory at the hands of Assyrian kings such as Adasi and Bel @-@ ibni , as well as to the Sealand Dynasty to the south , Elam to the east , and to the Kassites from the northeast . Thus was Babylon quickly reduced to the small and minor state it had once been upon its founding . The coup de grace for the Hammurabi 's Amorite Dynasty occurred in 1595 BC , when Babylon was sacked and conquered by the powerful Hittite Empire , thereby ending all Amorite political presence in Mesopotamia . However , the Indo @-@ European @-@ speaking Hittites did not remain , turning over Babylon to their Kassite allies , a people speaking a language isolate , from the Zagros mountains region . This Kassite Dynasty was to rule Babylon for over 400 years , adopting parts of the Babylonian culture , including Hammurabi 's code of laws .

Because of Hammurabi 's reputation as a lawgiver , his depiction can be found in several U.S. government buildings . Hammurabi is one of the 23 lawgivers depicted in marble bas @-@ reliefs in the chamber of the U.S. House of Representatives in the United States Capitol . A frieze by Adolph Weinman depicting the " great lawgivers of history " , including Hammurabi , is on the south wall of the U.S. Supreme Court building .

A theory current in the early part of the past century holds that Hammurabi was Amraphel , the King of Shinar in the Book of Genesis 14 : 1 .