**Prompt:**

In a single well developed paragraph, please explain the importance of Hammurabi’s Code and explain how it was used in the Mesopotamian city-state of Babylon. Discuss the principle of “an eye for an eye” and how it was used within the code.

**The Code of Hammurabi**

Hammurabi was a [Mesopotamian](http://www.mrdowling.com/603mesopotamia.html) king who recorded a system of laws called the Code of Hammurabi. He ordered 282 laws engraved in stone and placed in a public location for everyone to see.

Hammurabi's Code prescribed specific punishments for citizens who broke the law. One law said, "If a man put out the eye of another man, his eye shall be put out." Later historians summarized Hammurabi's Code with the phrase, "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.” This means that whoever commits an injury should be punished in the same manner as that injury.

Hammurabi’s code included what we today call both criminal and civil law. Criminal law consists of rules that define conduct. One law said, “if a son strikes his father, his hands shall be hewn off.” Civil law settles disputes among individuals. Hammurabi’s Code states, “if a man builds a house badly, and it falls and kills the owner, the builder is to be killed. If the owner’s son was killed, then the builder’s son is to be killed.”

One exception existed to the principle of “an eye for an eye.” It demonstrated that Hammurabi believed the gods had power over people and events. An accused person could jump into the Euphrates 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.” We can surmise from this law that not many people at that time were able to swim.

Hammurabi reigned from 1795 to 1750BCE in Babylon. Babylon was one of the many city-states that formed in ancient Mesopotamia. Babylon became famous for its spectacular entertainment. People still refer to a rich city with many luxuries as “a Babylon.”

Hammurabi’s Code is the earliest form of law that we are able to read and study because, in 1901, a French expedition to Mesopotamia uncovered a copy of the Babylonian king’s laws. The stone pillar where Hammurabi had his laws engraved is now on display at the Louvre, a museum in Paris, France.

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