

Hammurabi

*"[The gods] called by name me, Hammurabi, the exalted prince, . . . to bring about the rule of righteousness in the land."**

Much of what we know about Hammurabi was written by the leader himself. The words above are part of Hammurabi's introduction to his famous Code of Laws. Perhaps the best-known principle of the code is the one called "an eye for an eye." This principle means that anyone causing injury to another person would be punished with the same injury.



► Hammurabi's laws are carved on the base of this stela, or stone marker.

Hammurabi wrote that he was a religious man who had helped make the Babylonian Empire wealthy. He also told of his success as a warrior. However, the strongest theme in Hammurabi's writings is fairness. Hammurabi called himself "the shepherd of the oppressed and of the slaves." He said that he had "brought about the well-being of the oppressed" and mentioned that he had spared the lives of people who lived in the lands he conquered. These statements show Hammurabi's belief that all people—even the defeated and the powerless—deserve protection and justice.

Hammurabi knew that it would not be right to do everything that he had the power to do. He could have let the poor starve, denied rights to the powerless, and killed conquered people. Instead, his actions were guided by fairness.

*Hammurabi. *The Letters and Inscriptions of Hammurabi, King of Babylon, about B.C. 2200.* AMS Press, 1976.

Bio Brief

1790 B.C.

Reign began

- 1790 B.C. Hammurabi becomes king of Babylonian Empire

1750 B.C.

Reign ended

- 1750 B.C. Hammurabi's rule ends with his death

Biography

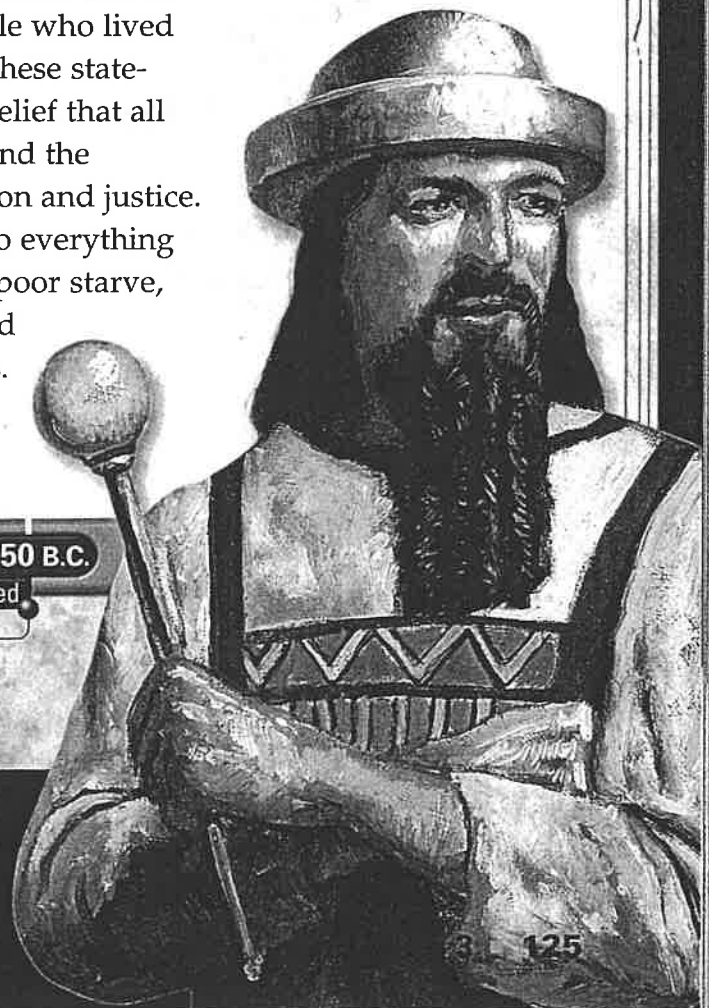
Trustworthiness
Respect
Responsibility

Fairness

Caring
Patriotism

Why Character Counts

◆ How did Hammurabi show fairness in how he ruled?



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