

The Deuteronomistic Code (Deut 12-26)

1. Laws and Law Codes in the Pentateuch

As we have seen, the Pentateuch integrates much legal material, esp.:

Decalogues (i.e., 10 commandments; apodictic):

- Ex 20:1-17 (E, possibly with P redaction)
- Ex 34 (J)
- Deut 5 (D)

Law Codes/Collections:

- Book of the Covenant (Ex 20:22-23:33 = earliest law code in Pentateuch; probably pre-monarchic but preserved by E; case law [21.1–22.17] + apodictic [22.18-23]).
- Ritual Laws (Lev 1-16 and Num 1-10; P; mostly apodictic)
- Holiness Code (Lev 17-26; preserved by P; mostly apodictic)
- Deuteronomistic Code (Deut 12-26; D; combination of apodictic and case law)

Apodictic law: Formal term to refer to laws stated with no rationale or specific reference to punishment (“Thou shalt not...”); also called “absolute law.”

Case law: Formal term to refer to laws stated in terms of circumstance and response (“If X, then Y...”; “when X, then Y”); also call “caustic law”



So far we’ve focused mainly on ethical laws in the Decalogue(s) and laws related to worship (the latter esp. in P). These form only a part of the legal material in the Pentateuch – for which the Hebrew term *torah* thus aptly fits as a description of content, inasmuch as means law, teaching, and direction.

It is clear that ancient Israel had a long legal tradition and a well-developed legal system, which covered a broad array of topics (worship, society, politics, sex, family, property, etc.).

Here too we find helpful ancient Near Eastern parallels = archaeological discoveries in the 20th century yielded law codes from neighbouring peoples – the earliest of which (e.g., Urnammu and the Lipit-Ishtar law codes) date to around 2000 BCE!

Most comprehensive and famous is the Babylonian law code of Hammurabi (ca. 1686 BCE; see above = iconography on the top of the stela on which the laws are inscribed, depicting Hammurabi [1728 BC-1686 BCE] receiving laws from the sun-god Shamesh; picture from <http://www.msjc.edu/art/djohnson/art101/101lecture6.html>).

After the end of the Babylonian Exile and esp. under the leadership of Ezra (see Neh 8), it seems that Pentateuch itself was used as the law code for Israel – consistent with Cyrus the Persian’s famous policies of reinstating the native religious and cultural traditions of the nations that he conquered from other empires.

2. Laws in Deut 12-26

The legal code at the core of Deuteronomy contains laws about kingship, social relations, family life, and civil matters as well as worship. It is a comprehensive guide to every aspect of community life, articulated through reference to the history of God’s dealings with Israel:

12-13: Proper worship: centralization of worship + laws against the worship of "other gods"

14:1-21: Maintaining the sanctity of non-priestly Israelites (no disfigurement in mourning; dietary laws)

14:22-15:18: Social laws: ameliorating the condition of the poor (charitable tithe; relief secured to debtors every seventh year; law of slavery)

15:19-23: Redemption of the firstborn

16:1-17: Festivals

16:18-20: Justice system: judges to be appointed in every city, and judgment to be impartial).

- 16:21-17:7: Proper worship: no asherot; sacrifices must be without blemish; stoning to death of an Israelite convicted of idolatry
- 17:8-13: Justice system: establishment of a supreme central tribunal
- 17:14-20: Laws pertaining to kings
- 18: Laws pertaining to Levites, priests, and prophets
- 19: Justice system: criminal law (manslaughter; theft; witnesses)
- 20: Rules of war
- 21-25: Laws about civil and domestic life (e.g., rite of expiation for an untraced murder; primogeniture; treatment of an undutiful son; treatment of the body of a criminal; lost property; sexes not to interchange garments; motherbird not to be taken with nest; parapets on roofs; prohibition of non-natural mixtures; tefillin; slander; adultery and seduction; prohibition of marriage with stepmother; conditions of admittance into Israel; cleanliness in the camp; humanity to escaped slave; religious prostitution forbidden; usury; vows; regard for neighbor's crops; divorce; pledges; stealing of servants; leprosy; wages of hired servant; fate of criminal's family (not to be punished); justice toward "stranger" (i.e., resident alien), widow, and orphan;; gleanings; limit to stripes; ox not to be muzzled while threshing; levirate marriage; modesty in women; just weights and measures; liturgical directions for the offering of first-fruits and of tithes)
- 26: Conclusion: historical summary and exhortation to obedience with appeal to Israel's special relationship with God

Differences between Deuteronomy and the rest of the Pentateuch:

Just as Deuteronomy gives a different perspective on the narrative material in the other four books (e.g., by interpreting and explaining the significance of events, by focusing on all Israel in place of P's interest in priests and JE's interest in tribal divisions), so it seems to reflect a later interpretation and expansion of earlier laws.

There are a number of laws in D not found elsewhere in the Pentateuch, e.g.:

- Additional laws on worship: Deut 12's centralization of worship + Deut 13's prohibitions about other gods, as well as stoning of Israelites convicted of idolatry, 17:2-7; rights and revenues of priests, 18:1-8; laws about the prophet, 18:9-22; ritual of expiation for an untraced murder in 21:1-9; religious prostitution forbidden, 23:17-18; liturgical directions for the offering of first-fruits and of the triennial tithe, 26:1-15.
- Additional political and property laws: The appointment of judges in every city, 16:18; central tribunal, 17:8-13; laws about the king's place in theocracy, 17:14-20; against the removal of boundary stones, 19:14; proper conduct during war, Deut 20 and 21:10-14.
- Additional civil and family laws: Primogeniture in 21:15-17 (see below); treatment of an undutiful son, 21:18-21; treatment of the body of a criminal, 21:22-23; sexes not to interchange garments, 22:5; motherbird not to be taken with nest, 22:6, 7; parapets on roofs, 22:8; slander against a newly married maiden, 22:13-21; conditions of admittance into the theocratic community, 23:1-8; kindness to escaped slave, 23:15-16; regard for neighbor's crops, 23:24-25; divorce, 24:1-4; criminal's family not to be punished with him, 24:16; limit to stripes 25:1-3; ox not to be muzzled while threshing, 25:4; levirate marriage, 25:5-10; modesty in women 25:11, 12

Some laws are repeated, while others are repeated in modified forms. D's laws resemble those in the Book of the Covenant (Ex 21-23) attributed to E. When there are parallels, D tends to be more sympathetic towards the poor and oppressed, possibly reflecting its later date.

- Slaves: The laws about limited slavery (time defined as 6 years) in Exod 21:2-11 specify that a slave is set free exactly as he entered bondage, thus having to leave behind any wife or children that he had during those 6 years, or submit to permanent slavery to keep them. In Deut 15:12-18, this is not mentioned, and D stresses that a master must aid the slave in beginning his free life; the only reason for permanent slavery is loyalty to the master.
- Women: E denies the right to release female slaves, treating all female slaves as permanent slaves, even as it seeks to secure their rights. D allows this and stresses that she stands on the same legal footing as the male slave. This is consistent with D's tendency to grant more rights to women in general. For instance, Deut 21:10-14 regulates the treatment of female prisoners-of-war, and Deut 22:13-19 gives protection over newly married woman against a husband trying to divorce her.

The first-born and the favored wife

Interestingly, Deuteronomy also denies the types of favoritism described in the patriarchal narratives in Genesis:

21:15 If a man has two wives, one of them loved and the other disliked, and if both the loved and the disliked have borne him sons, the firstborn being the son of the one who is disliked, ¹⁶then on the day when he wills his possessions to his sons, he is not permitted to treat the son of the loved as the firstborn in preference to the son of the disliked, who is the firstborn. ¹⁷He must acknowledge as firstborn the son of the one who is disliked, giving him a double portion of all that he has; since he is the first issue of his virility, the right of the firstborn is his.

Monotheism and the centralization of worship

As noted before, Deuteronomy's assertion of the need for the centralization of worship is its main departure from earlier materials. This theme is tightly related to Deuteronomy's overarching stress on monotheism, which is articulated positively in terms of love of God and negatively in terms of avoidance of idolatry and destruction of all idols and idolatrous shrines in the Promised Land.

In the redacted form of Deuteronomy, the law code is framed by calls to monotheism and love of God.

Deut 5-11 lays out the core of the law. Most significant is Deuteronomy 6, an explicit and powerful confirmation of monotheism ("Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.") – not only does this form the central statement of Deuteronomy but it would become the fundamental, monotheistic statement of Judaism (called the *Shema*; see textbox on next page).

Likewise, Deut 26 concludes the legal code with an exhortation to love and obey God: "This very day the LORD your God is commanding you to observe these statutes and ordinances; so observe them diligently with all your heart and with all your soul. Today you have obtained the LORD's agreement: to be your God; and for you to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, his commandments, and his ordinances, and to obey him. Today the LORD has obtained your agreement: to be his treasured people, as he promised you, and to keep his commandments; for him to set you high above all nations that he has made, in praise and in fame and in honor; and for you to be a people holy to the LORD your God, as he promised."

Hence, the laws in between are framed in terms of social, political, and familial action as an extension of love of God.

Shema (Lit. "Hear!"): title given to Deut 6:4, which would become the fundamental, monotheistic statement of Judaism, repeated daily in the Jewish liturgy, as per Deuteronomy's command that these words should be always remembered and repeated ("Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart; recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise"; Deut 6:6-7).

Tefillin (often translated "phalacteries"): small boxes which contain the Shema and other scriptures and are bound to the body during prayer in order to fulfill Deut 6's command to "Bind them [i.e., these words] as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead" (Deut 6:8).

Mezuzah (lit. "doorpost"): receptacle on a doorpost in which a scroll of the Shema is kept, as per the command to "write them [i.e., these words] on the doorposts of your house and on your gates" (Deut 6:9).

Selections from Law Code of Hammurabi

Translated by L. W. King [<http://eawc.evansville.edu/anthology/hammurabi.htm>]

When Anu the Sublime, King of the Anunaki, and Bel, the lord of Heaven and earth, who decreed the fate of the land, assigned to Marduk, the over-ruling son of Ea, God of righteousness, dominion over earthly man, and made him great among the Igigi, they called Babylon by his illustrious name, made it great on earth, and founded an everlasting kingdom in it, whose foundations are laid so solidly as those of heaven and earth; then Anu and Bel called by name me, Hammurabi, the exalted prince, who feared God, to bring about the rule of righteousness in the land, to destroy the wicked and the evil-doers; so that the strong should not harm the weak; so that I should rule over the black-headed people like Shamash, and enlighten the land, to further the well-being of mankind...

1. If any one ensnare another, putting a ban upon him, but he can not prove it, then he that ensnared him shall be put to death.
2. If any one bring an accusation against a man, and the accused go to the river and leap into the river, if he sink in the river his accuser shall take possession of his house. But if the river prove that the accused is not guilty, and he escape 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.
3. If any one bring an accusation of any crime before the elders, and does not prove what he has charged, he shall, if it be a capital offense charged, be put to death....
36. The field, garden, and house of a chieftain, of a man, or of one subject to quit-rent, can not be sold.
37. If any one buy the field, garden, and house of a chieftain, man, or one subject to quit-rent, his contract tablet of sale shall be broken (declared invalid) and he loses his money. The field, garden, and house return to their owners.
38. A chieftain, man, or one subject to quit-rent can not assign his tenure of field, house, and garden to his wife or daughter, nor can he assign it for a debt.
39. He may, however, assign a field, garden, or house which he has bought, and holds as property, to his wife or daughter or give it for debt.
40. He may sell field, garden, and house to a merchant (royal agents) or to any other public official, the buyer holding field, house, and garden for its usufruct.
109. If conspirators meet in the house of a tavern-keeper, and these conspirators are not captured and delivered to the court, the tavern-keeper shall be put to death.
110. If a "sister of a god" open a tavern, or enter a tavern to drink, then shall this woman be burned to death...
116. If the prisoner die in prison from blows or maltreatment, the master of the prisoner shall convict the merchant before the judge. If he was a free-born man, the son of the merchant shall be put to death; if it was a slave, he shall pay one-third of a mina of gold, and all that the master of the prisoner gave he shall forfeit.
117. If any one fail to meet a claim for debt, and sell himself, his wife, his son, and daughter for money or give them away to forced labor: they shall work for three years in the house of the man who bought them, or the proprietor, and in the fourth year they shall be set free.
118. If he give a male or female slave away for forced labor, and the merchant sublease them, or sell them for money, no objection can be raised.
128. If a man take a woman to wife, but have no intercourse with her, this woman is no wife to him.
129. If a man's wife be surprised (in flagrante delicto) with another man, both shall be tied and thrown into the water, but the husband may pardon his wife and the king his slaves.
130. If a man violate the wife (betrothed or child-wife) of another man, who has never known a man, and still lives in her father's house, and sleep with her and be surprised, this man shall be put to death, but the wife is blameless.
131. If a man bring a charge against one's wife, but she is not surprised with another man, she must take an oath and then may return to her house.
132. If the "finger is pointed" at a man's wife about another man, but she is not caught sleeping with the other man, she shall jump into the river for her husband.

133. If a man is taken prisoner in war, and there is a sustenance in his house, but his wife leave house and court, and go to another house: because this wife did not keep her court, and went to another house, she shall be judicially condemned and thrown into the water.
134. If any one be captured in war and there is not sustenance in his house, if then his wife go to another house this woman shall be held blameless.
135. If a man be taken prisoner in war and there be no sustenance in his house and his wife go to another house and bear children; and if later her husband return and come to his home: then this wife shall return to her husband, but the children follow their father.
136. If any one leave his house, run away, and then his wife go to another house, if then he return, and wishes to take his wife back: because he fled from his home and ran away, the wife of this runaway shall not return to her husband.
137. If a man wish to separate from a woman who has borne him children, or from his wife who has borne him children: then he shall give that wife her dowry, and a part of the usufruct of field, garden, and property, so that she can rear her children. When she has brought up her children, a portion of all that is given to the children, equal as that of one son, shall be given to her. She may then marry the man of her heart.
138. If a man wishes to separate from his wife who has borne him no children, he shall give her the amount of her purchase money and the dowry which she brought from her father's house, and let her go.
139. If there was no purchase price he shall give her one mina of gold as a gift of release.
140. If he be a freed man he shall give her one-third of a mina of gold.
141. If a man's wife, who lives in his house, wishes to leave it, plunges into debt, tries to ruin her house, neglects her husband, and is judicially convicted: if her husband offer her release, she may go on her way, and he gives her nothing as a gift of release. If her husband does not wish to release her, and if he take another wife, she shall remain as servant in her husband's house.
142. If a woman quarrel with her husband, and say: "You are not congenial to me," the reasons for her prejudice must be presented. If she is guiltless, and there is no fault on her part, but he leaves and neglects her, then no guilt attaches to this woman, she shall take her dowry and go back to her father's house.
143. If she is not innocent, but leaves her husband, and ruins her house, neglecting her husband, this woman shall be cast into the water.
144. If a man take a wife and this woman give her husband a maid-servant, and she bear him children, but this man wishes to take another wife, this shall not be permitted to him; he shall not take a second wife.
145. If a man take a wife, and she bear him no children, and he intend to take another wife: if he take this second wife, and bring her into the house, this second wife shall not be allowed equality with his wife.
146. If a man take a wife and she give this man a maid-servant as wife and she bear him children, and then this maid assume equality with the wife: because she has borne him children her master shall not sell her for money, but he may keep her as a slave, reckoning her among the maid-servants.
147. If she have not borne him children, then her mistress may sell her for money.
148. If a man take a wife, and she be seized by disease, if he then desire to take a second wife he shall not put away his wife, who has been attacked by disease, but he shall keep her in the house which he has built and support her so long as she lives.
149. If this woman does not wish to remain in her husband's house, then he shall compensate her for the dowry that she brought with her from her father's house, and she may go.
150. If a man give his wife a field, garden, and house and a deed therefor, if then after the death of her husband the sons raise no claim, then the mother may bequeath all to one of her sons whom she prefers, and need leave nothing to his brothers.
151. If a woman who lived in a man's house made an agreement with her husband, that no creditor can arrest her, and has given a document therefor: if that man, before he married that woman, had a debt, the creditor can not hold the woman for it. But if the woman, before she entered the man's house, had contracted a debt, her creditor can not arrest her husband therefor.
152. If after the woman had entered the man's house, both contracted a debt, both must pay the merchant.

153. If the wife of one man on account of another man has their mates (her husband and the other man's wife) murdered, both of them shall be impaled.

154. If a man be guilty of incest with his daughter, he shall be driven from the place (exiled).

155. If a man betroth a girl to his son, and his son have intercourse with her, but he (the father) afterward defile her, and be surprised, then he shall be bound and cast into the water (drowned).

156. If a man betroth a girl to his son, but his son has not known her, and if then he defile her, he shall pay her half a gold mina, and compensate her for all that she brought out of her father's house. She may marry the man of her heart.

157. If any one be guilty of incest with his mother after his father, both shall be burned.

158. If any one be surprised after his father with his chief wife, who has borne children, he shall be driven out of his father's house.

159. If any one, who has brought chattels into his father-in-law's house, and has paid the purchase-money, looks for another wife, and says to his father-in-law: "I do not want your daughter," the girl's father may keep all that he had brought.

160. If a man bring chattels into the house of his father-in-law, and pay the "purchase price" (for his wife): if then the father of the girl say: "I will not give you my daughter," he shall give him back all that he brought with him.

161. If a man bring chattels into his father-in-law's house and pay the "purchase price," if then his friend slander him, and his father-in-law say to the young husband: "You shall not marry my daughter," then he shall give back to him undiminished all that he had brought with him; but his wife shall not be married to the friend.

162. If a man marry a woman, and she bear sons to him; if then this woman die, then shall her father have no claim on her dowry; this belongs to her sons.

163. If a man marry a woman and she bear him no sons; if then this woman die, if the "purchase price" which he had paid into the house of his father-in-law is repaid to him, her husband shall have no claim upon the dowry of this woman; it belongs to her father's house.

164. If his father-in-law do not pay back to him the amount of the "purchase price" he may subtract the amount of the "Purchase price" from the dowry, and then pay the remainder to her father's house.

165. If a man give to one of his sons whom he prefers a field, garden, and house, and a deed therefor: if later the father die, and the brothers divide the estate, then they shall first give him the present of his father, and he shall accept it; and the rest of the paternal property shall they divide.

166. If a man take wives for his son, but take no wife for his minor son, and if then he die: if the sons divide the estate, they shall set aside besides his portion the money for the "purchase price" for the minor brother who had taken no wife as yet, and secure a wife for him.

167. If a man marry a wife and she bear him children: if this wife die and he then take another wife and she bear him children: if then the father die, the sons must not partition the estate according to the mothers, they shall divide the dowries of their mothers only in this way; the paternal estate they shall divide equally with one another.

168. If a man wish to put his son out of his house, and declare before the judge: "I want to put my son out," then the judge shall examine into his reasons. If the son be guilty of no great fault, for which he can be rightfully put out, the father shall not put him out.

169. If he be guilty of a grave fault, which should rightfully deprive him of the filial relationship, the father shall forgive him the first time; but if he be guilty of a grave fault a second time the father may deprive his son of all filial relation.

170. If his wife bear sons to a man, or his maid-servant have borne sons, and the father while still living says to the children whom his maid-servant has borne: "My sons," and he count them with the sons of his wife; if then the father die, then the sons of the wife and of the maid-servant shall divide the paternal property in common. The son of the wife is to partition and choose.

171. If, however, the father while still living did not say to the sons of the maid-servant: "My sons," and then the father dies, then the sons of the maid-servant shall not share with the sons of the wife, but the freedom of the maid and her sons shall be granted. The sons of the wife shall have no right to enslave the sons of the maid; the wife shall take her dowry (from her father), and the gift that her husband gave her and deeded to her (separate from dowry, or the purchase-money paid her

father), and live in the home of her husband: so long as she lives she shall use it, it shall not be sold for money. Whatever she leaves shall belong to her children.

172. If her husband made her no gift, she shall be compensated for her gift, and she shall receive a portion from the estate of her husband, equal to that of one child. If her sons oppress her, to force her out of the house, the judge shall examine into the matter, and if the sons are at fault the woman shall not leave her husband's house. If the woman desire to leave the house, she must leave to her sons the gift which her husband gave her, but she may take the dowry of her father's house. Then she may marry the man of her heart.

173. If this woman bear sons to her second husband, in the place to which she went, and then die, her earlier and later sons shall divide the dowry between them.

174. If she bear no sons to her second husband, the sons of her first husband shall have the dowry....

179. If a "sister of a god," or a prostitute, receive a gift from her father, and a deed in which it has been explicitly stated that she may dispose of it as she pleases, and give her complete disposition thereof: if then her father die, then she may leave her property to whomsoever she pleases. Her brothers can raise no claim thereto.

180. If a father give a present to his daughter -- either marriageable or a prostitute (unmarriageable) -- and then die, then she is to receive a portion as a child from the paternal estate, and enjoy its usufruct so long as she lives. Her estate belongs to her brothers.

181. If a father devote a temple-maid or temple-virgin to God and give her no present: if then the father die, she shall receive the third of a child's portion from the inheritance of her father's house, and enjoy its usufruct so long as she lives. Her estate belongs to her brothers.

182. If a father devote his daughter as a wife of Mardi of Babylon (as in 181), and give her no present, nor a deed; if then her father die, then shall she receive one-third of her portion as a child of her father's house from her brothers, but Marduk may leave her estate to whomsoever she wishes....

195. If a son strike his father, his hands shall be hewn off.

196. If a man put out the eye of another man, his eye shall be put out.

197. If he break another man's bone, his bone shall be broken.

198. If he put out the eye of a freed man, or break the bone of a freed man, he shall pay one gold mina.

199. If he put out the eye of a man's slave, or break the bone of a man's slave, he shall pay one-half of its value.

200. If a man knock out the teeth of his equal, his teeth shall be knocked out.

201. If he knock out the teeth of a freed man, he shall pay one-third of a gold mina.

202. If any one strike the body of a man higher in rank than he, he shall receive sixty blows with an ox-whip in public....

215. If a physician make a large incision with an operating knife and cure it, or if he open a tumor (over the eye) with an operating knife, and saves the eye, he shall receive ten shekels in money.

216. If the patient be a freed man, he receives five shekels.

217. If he be the slave of some one, his owner shall give the physician two shekels.

218. If a physician make a large incision with the operating knife, and kill him, or open a tumor with the operating knife, and cut out the eye, his hands shall be cut off.

Laws of justice which Hammurabi, the wise king, established.

A righteous law, and pious statute did he teach the land. Hammurabi, the protecting king am I. I have not withdrawn myself from the men, whom Bel gave to me, the rule over whom Marduk gave to me, I was not negligent, but I made them a peaceful abiding-place. I expounded all great difficulties, I made the light shine upon them...

The great gods have called me, I am the salvation-bearing shepherd, whose staff is straight, the good shadow that is spread over my city; on my breast I cherish the inhabitants of the land of Sumer and Akkad; in my shelter I have let them repose in peace; in my deep wisdom have I enclosed them.

That the strong might not injure the weak, in order to protect the widows and orphans, I have in Babylon the city where Anu and Bel raise high their head, in E-Sagil, the Temple, whose foundations stand firm as heaven and earth, in order to bespeak justice in the land, to settle all disputes, and heal all injuries, set up these my precious words, written upon my memorial stone, before the image of me, as king of righteousness...

In E-Sagil, which I love, let my name be ever repeated; let the oppressed, who has a case at law, come and stand before this my image as king of righteousness; let him read the inscription, and understand my precious words: the inscription will explain his case to him; he will find out what is just, and his heart will be glad, so that he will say:

"Hammurabi is a ruler, who is as a father to his subjects, who holds the words of Marduk in reverence, who has achieved conquest for Marduk over the north and south, who rejoices the heart of Marduk, his lord, who has bestowed benefits for ever and ever on his subjects, and has established order in the land."

When he reads the record, let him pray with full heart to Marduk, my lord, and Zarpanit, my lady; and then shall the protecting deities and the gods, who frequent E-Sagil, graciously grant the desires daily presented before Marduk, my lord, and Zarpanit, my lady.

In future time, through all coming generations, let the king, who may be in the land, observe the words of righteousness which I have written on my monument; let him not alter the law of the land which I have given, the edicts which I have enacted; my monument let him not mar.

If such a ruler have wisdom, and be able to keep his land in order, he shall observe the words which I have written in this inscription; the rule, statute, and law of the land which I have given; the decisions which I have made will this inscription show him; let him rule his subjects accordingly, speak justice to them, give right decisions, root out the miscreants and criminals from this land, and grant prosperity to his subjects.

Hammurabi, the king of righteousness, on whom Shamash has conferred right (or law) am I. My words are well considered; my deeds are not equaled; to bring low those that were high; to humble the proud, to expel insolence....

If a succeeding ruler considers my words, which I have written in this my inscription, if he do not annul my law, nor corrupt my words, nor change my monument, then may Shamash lengthen that king's reign, as he has that of me, the king of righteousness, that he may reign in righteousness over his subjects.

If this ruler do not esteem my words, which I have written in my inscription, if he despise my curses, and fear not the curse of God, if he destroy the law which I have given, corrupt my words, change my monument, efface my name, write his name there, or on account of the curses commission another so to do, that man, whether king or ruler, patesi, or commoner, no matter what he be, may the great God (Anu), the Father of the gods, who has ordered my rule, withdraw from him the glory of royalty, break his scepter, curse his destiny.

May Bel, the lord, who fixeth destiny, whose command can not be altered, who has made my kingdom great, order a rebellion which his hand can not control; may he let the wind of the overthrow of his habitation blow, may he ordain the years of his rule in groaning, years of scarcity, years of famine, darkness without light, death with seeing eyes be fated to him; may he (Bel) order with his potent mouth the destruction of his city, the dispersion of his subjects, the cutting off of his rule, the removal of his name and memory from the land.... May Bel curse him with the potent curses of his mouth that can not be altered, and may they come upon him forthwith.