

Hammurabi's Code of Laws vs. Covenant Code (Exodus 20 – 23)

COMPARISON AND CONTRAST OF SELECTED LAWS

COMPARISONS

<p>#127 – This is a law that deals with lying and slander. If a person makes accusations against a “sister of god” or a man’s wife and they cannot prove the accusations, the person will go before judges and have is face or hair cut as punishment.</p>	<p>Exodus 20: 16 – The Ten Commandments is probably the most well-know of the laws and verse 16 deals lying. A person will never tell a lie about their friend.</p>
<p>These two laws get to the root of basic similarities, that is, the both say if you lie about someone, you will be punished for it.</p>	
<p>Hammurabi’s Code of Laws</p>	<p>Covenant Code (Exodus 20 – 23)</p>
<p>#263 – This is a tit-for-tat law. It basically states that if a person (he) kills a cow or sheep that belongs to someone else, he is to give that person (the owner) the same in return. That is, if he kills a cow he has to give the owner a cow and if he kills a sheep he has to give the owner a sheep.</p>	<p>Exodus 22: 1 and 4 – This is a Law of Restitution that goes into detail about describing the worth of a killed ox or sheep. If someone kills another person’s ox or sheep, they have to pay the person back; five ox or 4 sheep. It goes on to say that if the person who steals cannot repay in this manner, they will be sold into slavery. If the person is caught in the act of stealing the ox or sheep, they have to pay double the amount, which is 10 ox or eight sheep.</p>
<p>These two laws are similar in that they speak to thieves who steal livestock. They both indicate that if the crime is committed, there will be more to pay than what was taken.</p>	
<p># 195 – This law describes violence between family members. If a son decides to hit his father, his punishment is to have his hands cut off.</p>	<p>Exodus 21: 15 – This is a Law concerning Violence. It says that whoever decides to hit their mom or dad will be put to death.</p>
<p>There are parallels between these two laws. They both speak of harming family and the punishment that is to be handed out for it.</p>	
<p>#42 – There are many laws about the field and this is one of them. This law indicates if someone takes over a field and it does not yield crops and there is proof of the person working the land, the person responsible must give the owner of the field the same amount of crop that is comparable to what didn’t grow.</p>	<p>Exodus 22: 5 – This is another Law of Restitution and describes the punishment of someone who causes crops to be barren due to being grazed or letting livestock loose. The punishment for this act is for the person who caused the field to go barren to give the owner the best of what they have.</p>
<p>The similarities in the laws are simple; if you ruin someone else’s farm land, you are to pay that person back crops that are comparable to what was lost.</p>	

CONTRASTS

Hammurabi's Code of Laws	Covenant Code (Exodus 20 – 23)
<p>#263 – This law is rather simple and only speaks to what happens if a cow or sheep is killed. The person who kills the livestock shall give the owner back the same amount from their own stores. It does not speak to what happens if the thief cannot pay or if the thief is caught in the act like Exodus 22a:1 does.</p>	<p>Exodus 22: 1 and 4 – This law goes in to detail about what happens if a person not only steals an ox or sheep, but if they also kill it or sell it. The obvious contrast between these two laws is the types of livestock that they are speaking of.</p>
<p>From simple differences of the types of livestock that are used, to the more complex difference of the amount of detail each uses, these laws have a lot in common, but just as much is different. #263 appears to indicate a simple thieving act whereas Exodus 22: 1 and 4 describe different scenarios of what could happen if someone steals or kills someone else's livestock and whether the livestock is alive and whether the person is found with the livestock. Quite the difference!</p>	
<p>#195 – This law specifies what happens if a son hit a <i>father</i>. There is no distinction for daughters or mothers. It does not give details about what happens to the son besides his hands being cut off.</p>	<p>Exodus 21: 15 – This law indicates <i>whoever</i> hits a parent, <i>father</i> or <i>mother</i> will die. One thing I am not clear on is if "shall be put to death" in this verse is truly to be killed or if this is to mean severe punishment.</p>
<p>Both of these laws make use of the word "strike" but the context is different and may indicate how severe it is. When #195 uses that word, the context indicates that it is a bad thing to do, but not a crime to die for. Exodus 21:15 uses "strike", but since the offender "shall be put to death", to me, that means "strike" might be defined as killing a father or mother.</p>	
<p>#42 – This law indicates that a person takes over the field and I get the impression that it is an agreement between that person and the owner</p>	<p>Exodus 22: 15 – The context of this law indicates causality and that the person who caused the barren land did it on purpose and was not given authorization to be there.</p>
<p>The differences between these two laws is another use of context. #42 is a simple law and indicates or feels like the owner gave permission to the other person and it was seemingly an accident that the crops did not grow. Exodus 22: 15, on the other hand has a feel of thievery and seems to indicate that the person who caused the crops to not grow stole the land from the owner or tricked the owner into letting them tend it. Exodus 22: 15 also extends the "field" idea to not only field crops, but vineyards. This difference could be indicative of the narrator or the time frame this was written.</p>	

#127 – This law is one of a handful that goes into more detail about a wrongdoing than the Exodus version. Not only does this law describe what the punishment will be (a cut or mark on the accuser) but it also detail the place of the cut or mark (face or hair) and it indicates that the punishment is to be against a person who lies about a “sister of god” or the “wife of any one”.

There is a reversal in these laws compared to other laws I’ve described. Where the bible is concerned, the laws it contains are for the most part pretty detailed about the kind of crime and the kind of punishment that is involved. Many of the laws in the Hammurabi’s Code of Laws are simple and straight to the point. There isn’t as much detail. This example, however is the opposite of that.

There is detail in #127, but not in Exodus 20:15.

Exodus 20:15 – In this law, there is no description of who “your neighbor” is or what happens if a person lies against him. Many of the laws go in to great detail about the crime and punishment, but this one doesn’t. It might be because it’s a commandment, but there are 4 sets of those, so that might not be the reason.