

# The *Code of Ur-Nammu* (2100 BCE)

[The *Code of Ur-Nammu* is the 2nd oldest surviving code of law in the historical record today.]



I, King Ur-Nammu of Sumer & Akkad, give the gods a monthly sacrificial offering of 21,600 *silas* of barley, 30 sheep, and 30 *silas* of butter! When the sky god An and the wind god Enlil gave Ur to the moon god Nanna, I made Namhani the governor of Lagash, and I returned Nanna's boat to Ur! Before that time, warlords controlled the fields, pirates controlled the seas, and rustlers stole livestock. By the command of the sun god Utu, and with the might of the moon god Nanna, I brought fairness to the land! I freed Sumer & Akkad from warlords and rustlers, and I freed the seas of pirates! I eliminated enmity, violence, and unfairness in the land! I standardized the units for weighing silver, bronze, and copper!

- If a man floods someone's field, he shall pay 72 *silas* of grain for every 10 *sars* of field that he flooded.
- If a man commits murder, he shall be put to death.
- If a man bears false witness to a crime, he shall pay 15 *shekels* of silver.
- If a man breaks someone's bone with a club, he shall pay 60 *shekels* of silver.
- If a man cuts off someone's foot, he shall pay 10 *shekels* of silver.
- If a man cuts off someone's nose, he shall pay 40 *shekels* of silver.
- If a man knocks out someone's tooth, he shall pay 2 *shekels* of silver.

## Questions about the ***Code of Ur-Nammu***.

Ur-Nammu believed that criminals should *pay* for their crimes. In other words, he believed that every crime has a *price*. Keeping this in mind, answer the following ten questions.

1. According to Ur-Nammu, which is worse?
  - (a) Cutting off someone's nose
  - (b) Cutting off someone's foot
2. Keeping in mind with your answer to question 1, do you agree with Ur-Nammu? *Why or why not?* Explain.
3. According to Ur-Nammu, which is worse?
  - (a) Cutting off someone's foot
  - (b) Falsely accusing someone of a crime

4. Keeping in mind with your answer to question 3, do you agree with Ur-Nammu?  
*Why or why not? Explain.*

5. According to Ur-Nammu, which is worse?

- (a) Falsely accusing someone of a crime
- (b) Cutting off someone's nose

6. Keeping in mind with your answer to question 5, do you agree with Ur-Nammu?  
*Why or why not? Explain.*

7. According to Ur-Nammu, which is worse?

- (a) Cutting off someone's foot
- (b) Breaking someone's bone with a club

8. Keeping in mind with your answer to question 7, do you agree with Ur-Nammu?  
*Why or why not? Explain.*

9. For this two-part question, make sure to show your work, because that is how you explain your answer to each part of the question.

(a) According to Ur-Nammu, what price should somebody pay for flooding 20 sars of someone else's field? Express your answer in terms of *silas* of grain, and show your work.

(b) According to Ur-Nammu, what price should somebody pay for flooding 5 sars of someone else's field? Express your answer in terms of *silas* of grain, and show your work.

10. The legal term "*Lex Talionis*" is Latin for "The Law of Retaliation". Yet rather than any retaliation whatsoever, it specifically means that the punishment for a crime must be as severe as the crime itself. In the *Code of Ur-Nammu*, which one of the laws is the most obvious/uncontroversial example of *Lex Talionis*? Find the appropriate bullet point, and state the "*if-then*" statement in full.