

Court Case: Builder Accused of Faulty Construction

Characters: Judge 1 Builder
Judge 2 Nobleman

Judge 1: The next case involves this builder who is accused of faulty construction, and this nobleman whose house collapsed.

Judge 2: Builder, would you please tell the Assembly what business you are in?

Builder: *(Stands and speaks proudly.)* I am a builder. I build private houses for noblemen.

Judge 2: And did you build a house for the nobleman who lives on the hill?

Builder: Yes, I did.

Judge 2: And did the nobleman seem satisfied with the house you built for him?

Builder: *(Speaks with confidence.)* Yes, he did. He paid me two shekels per square foot as the law requires.

Judge 2: *(Sneers.)* Nobleman, tell the Assembly what happened to the house you had built.

Nobleman: *(Looks at the judge. Speaks with an angry voice.)* During a heavy rainstorm, the bricks melted and the house fell down.

Judge 1: *(Frowns and speaks harshly.)* Was anything inside the house damaged?

Nobleman: *(Still angry.)* I lost all my furniture, clay pots, and clothes.

Judge 2: *(Looks sympathetically toward the nobleman.)* Was anyone injured?

Nobleman: *(Steps forward and his voice begins to shake.)* Yes, my son and one of my slaves were killed.

Judge 1:

(Looks at the audience.) It is now time for the Assembly to make a decision. You must decide if the builder is guilty of a crime and, if so, what punishment he shall receive. In making your decision, consider these laws from the Code of Hammurabi that you have before you:

1. If a builder constructed a house for a nobleman, but did not make his work strong and the house that he built collapsed and caused the death of the owner of the house, that builder shall be put to death.
2. If a builder constructed a house for a nobleman, but did not make his work strong and the house that he built collapsed and caused the death of a son of the owner of the house, the son of the builder shall be put to death.
3. If a builder constructed a house for a nobleman, but did not make his work strong and the house that he built collapsed and caused the death of a slave belonging to the owner of the house, the builder shall give another slave to the owner of the house.
4. If a builder constructed a house for a nobleman, but did not make his work strong and the house that he built collapsed and destroyed goods, the builder shall make good whatever was destroyed; also, the builder shall reconstruct the house at his own expense.

Judge 2:

Ladies and gentlemen, you have heard the evidence and have read the laws. You must now judge the case.

Stop Here
& Discuss



- **What is the problem in this case?**
- **How did the builder know the nobleman was satisfied with the house he had built for him?**
- **What happened to the nobleman's house?**
- **What did the nobleman lose in his house?**
- **Who was killed in the accident?**