

Student Handout 5: Confession by the Deceased

From The Book of the Dead (about 1500 BCE).

In ancient Egypt, many laws were common knowledge. The following document could be seen as evidence of law. As you read, jot down an example of the law that is hinted at with each line. This is an example of what a deceased person would confess to the God of the Dead who would judge the quality of his/her afterlife.

Hail to you, O great god, judge of the dead! I know your name, and that of the forty-two gods with you who punish evildoers on the day of reckoning. Lord of Justice is your name. I have come to you; I have brought you justice; I have expelled deceit for you.

I have not committed evil against men.

I have not mistreated cattle.

I have not blasphemed a god.

I have not defamed a slave to his superior.

I have not made anyone weep.

I have not killed.

I have given no order to a killer.

I have not added to the weight of the balance.

I have not built a dam against running water.

I am pure! I am pure! I am pure!

I have not stolen.

I have not been greedy or envious.

I have not told lies.

I have not practiced usury.

I have not gossiped.

I have not committed adultery.

I have not been quarrelsome.

I have not been abusive.