

## Mesopotamia Documents

### **Document A:** The Sumerian Goddess Inanna Looks After the City Agade (About 2000 BCE)

So that the warehouses would be provisioned  
that dwellings would be founded in the city,  
that its people would eat splendid food...  
that acquaintances would dine together,  
that foreigners would cruise about like unusual birds in the sky...  
At that time, she filled Agade...with gold,  
Delivered copper, tin, and blocks of lapis lazuli to its storehouses...  
Its harbor, where ships docked, was full of excitement...  
Its king, the shepherd Naram-Sin, rose like the sun on the holy throne of Agade..  
Its city wall touched heaven, like a mountain....  
Ships brought the goods of Sumer itself upstream [to Agade],  
The highland Amorites, people ignorant of agriculture,  
Came before her there with spirited bulls and spirited bucks,  
Meluhhans [from the Indus valley, and] people of the black mountains,  
Brought exotic wares down to her...  
All the governors, temple administrators, and land registrars of the Gude'ena  
Regularly supplied monthly and New Year offerings there.

### **Document B:** A Sumerian Father Gives Advice To His Son (About 2300 BCE)

My son, let me give you instructions.  
Pay attention to them !  
Do not beat a farmer's son, or he will break your irrigation canal....  
When you are drunk, do not judge....  
Do not break into a house...  
Do not speak with a girl when you are married, the [likelihood of] slander is strong...  
Do not allow your sheep to graze in untested grazing grounds...  
Submit to strength. Bow down to the mighty man.

### **Document C:** A Teacher's Math Examination Question to Student (About 1700 BCE)

“Do you know multiplication, reciprocals, coefficients, balancing of accounts, administrative accounting, how to apportion all kinds of pay, divide property, and delimit shares of fields?”

**Document D:** A Sumerian Father Wants His Teen-Ager To Be A Scribe (About 2000 BCE)

...Why do you idle about? Go to school, recite your assignment, open your schoolbag, write your tablet, let your "big brother" write your new tablet for you. Be humble and show fear before your apprentice teacher. When you show terror, he will like you.... Never in my life did I make you carry reeds to the canebrake. I never said to you "Follow my caravans." I never sent you to work as a laborer. "Go, work and support me," I never in my life said that to you. Others like you support their parents by working... Compared to them you are not a man at all. Night and day you waste in pleasures.... Among all craftsmen that live in the land, no work is more difficult than that of a scribe. [But] it is in accordance with the fate decreed by [the god] Enlil that a man should follow his father's work.

## Egypt Documents

**Document A:** Praise for Pharaoh's New City (About 1300 BCE)

His majesty—life, prosperity, health !—has built himself a city, named "Great of Victories." All men have left their towns and are settled in its territory. Temples of the gods Amon and Set, and the goddesses Astarte and Uto, mark its four quarters. Pharaoh is in it as a god.

The Residence is full of supplies, its ponds with fish, its lakes with birds. Its granaries are so full of grain they come near to the sky. Onions and leeks are available for food, and lettuce, pomegranates, apples, olives. Its ships go out and come back to mooring, so it has supplies and food every day. One rejoices to live there.

The small in it are like the great. The young men are dressed up every day, with sweet oil on their heads and newly dressed hair. The ale of the city is tasty, so is beer from the harbor and wine of the vineyards. The singers of "Great of Victories" are sweet, being taught at Memphis [the old capital of Egypt]. So live there content, Pharaoh—thou god!

**Document B:** Instructions Of The Vizier Ptah-hotep To His Son (About 2450 BCE)

Let not your heart be puffed up, confident that you are a wise man. Take counsel with the ignorant as well as the wise. Good speech may be found with maidservants at the grindstones....

Wrongdoing has never brought its undertaking into port. Fraud may gain riches, but the strength of justice is that it lasts...

If you sit at the table of one greater than you, speak only when spoken to. Laugh after him.

When carrying a message from one great man to another, be accurate. Beware of making words worse through vulgar speech, and so making for hostility between them.

If you have a son who listens to you and takes care of your property as he should, do not cut your heart off from him. But if he does not carry out your instructions, if his manners in your household are wretched, if he rebels against all you say, cast him off. He is not your son at all.

If you want to make friendship last in a home to which you have access as a master, a brother or a friend, beware of approaching the women. Do not do it.

Do not be greedy, or envious of your own kindred.

Love your wife at home as is fitting. Fill her belly, clothe her back. Make her heart glad as long as you live. Do not contend with her at law, but keep her from gaining control.

Bow your back to your superior, then your reward will be as it should be. Opposition to a superior is a painful thing.

**Document C:** A Selection of Math Problems (About 1850 BCE)

Problems 1-6: How do you divide  $N$  loaves between 10 men, when the value of  $N$  is 1,2,6,7,8,9?

Problem 26: A quantity added to a quarter of that quantity becomes 15. What is the quantity?

Problem 50: A round field has a diameter of 9 khet. What is its area?

Problem 64: Divide 10 hekats of barley among 10 men so that each gets  $\frac{1}{8}$  hekat more than the one before.

**Document D:** An Egyptian Father Wants His Son To Be A Scribe, About 2000 BCE

On his way to put him into the Writing School among the children of officials, he said to his son: I have seen how the laboring man is burdened. You should set your heart on pursuing writing instead. The scribe's place is in the Residence City, and he shall not be poor in it. Men greet him respectfully, and he is not clothed in the workman's apron.

If you leave the school after midday is announced, and go rollicking in the street, it is not for you. If three loaves should satisfy you, and two measures of beer, but there is still no limit to your belly, fight against it.

I have set you on the way of god. The scribe reaches the halls of the magistrates. No scribe lacks food, being fed from the property of the King's House—life, prosperity, health!

**Document E:** Negative Confession By the Deceased In the Underworld, Afterlife Depending On Its Truth, From The Book Of The Dead (About 1500 BCE)

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.

May you rescue me from the devourer of the condemned dead! I have come to you without sin, without guilt, without evil, without a witness against me, without one against whom I have taken action. I have come here to testify to justice, and to bring the scales in which my character is weighed against the feather of truth into perfect balance.