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Bad Kids: The Worst Behaved Children in History

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Tony Robinson

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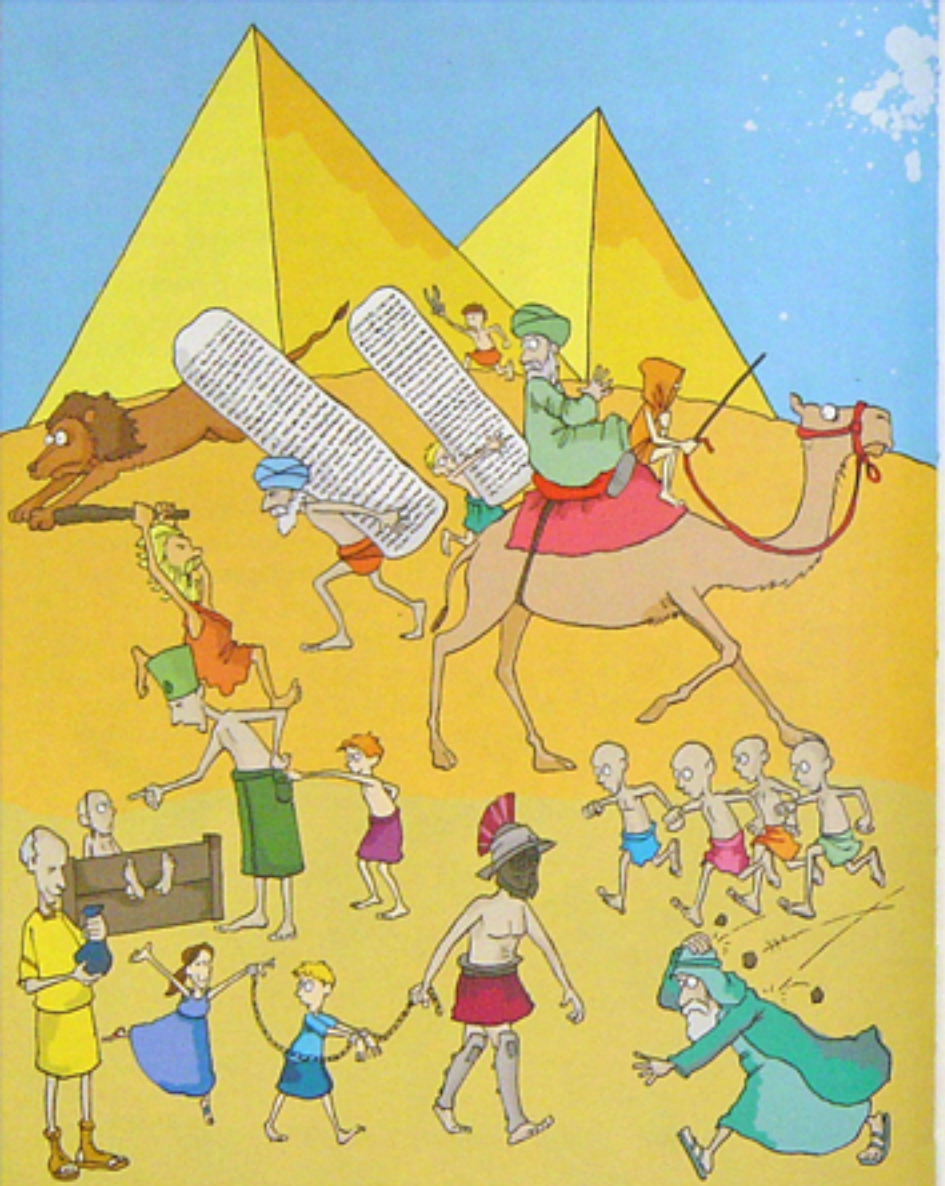
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Chapter 1

Pyramids, gladiators and skewering

Which explains why naughty boys couldn't pick their noses!

More than five thousand years ago, when the rest of us were running around in animal skins clobbering antelope with big clubs . . .

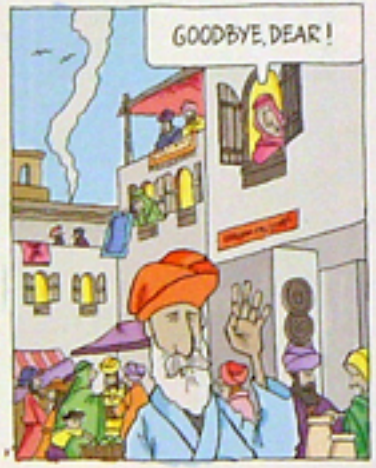


. . . the people of southern Iraq had a very nice lifestyle.

How come?

Because they lived in cities – with plenty of food, proper houses, nice furniture and indoor bathrooms . . . in fact they practically invented cities. Most other people lived in caves, in huts and in villages.

Big cities are exciting, fast-moving places. There's lots of money about, loads of shops, and people come to them from far away



with strange new music, weird accents and crazy ideas like building toilets instead of squatting over holes in the ground.

The trouble is that cities get crowded – and you know what it's like if you have to share a small bedroom with your brother or sister, or you're stuck in a crowded school bus in a traffic jam. Voices get raised, rows start and fists fly. The same was true of the first cities: they could easily turn into pretty lawless places.

A very long list of dos and don'ts in ancient Iraq



So the Iraqis invented writing. And what did they use this brand-new invention for?

To create the world's first football league tables?

No.

To scribble down a nice little recipe for fresh strawberry mousse wrapped in chocolate with a cream topping?

No.

They made up laws telling the people in the big cities not to muck about, and wrote them down.

One of these laws said that if a father told his son, 'You're not my son,' the son had to leave home and give up everything he owned. This might not seem very fair, although it would have been a bit fairer if the son had been allowed to say the same thing to his

father. But he wasn't, because if the words 'You're not my father' even sneaked out of the corner of his mouth his dad was allowed to cut his hair off and sell him as a slave!



In fact, if you were a dad and your son misbehaved, you could do all kinds of nasty things to him, like lock him up and put heavy chains around his ankles. You could even take a red-hot branding iron out of the fire and press it against his forehead until it sizzled and left a permanent scar.

But they didn't have newspapers, televisions or the Internet in those days, so how did ordinary people know what was allowed and what wasn't?

Because the great Iraqi King Hammurabi had all the laws chiselled on to **huge stones** so everyone in his cities could see them.

So, for instance, if you were walking down the high street and you glanced up at the massive stones, you might notice Hammurabi's Law number 195, which said, 'If a son hits his father, his fingers shall be cut off.'

And from that moment on you'd know that if you ever clouted your dad, you could say goodbye to nose-picking.

Ancient Egypt

Around the corner from Iraq, another bunch of people were soon writing down their laws and punishments. I'm pretty sure you'll have heard of this lot: they're the ancient Egyptians.



Just like in Iraq, Egyptian fathers were allowed to clobber their kids (and their wives!) as much as they liked, and no one could stop them. Not only that, but teachers could whack kids too. This was thought pretty useful at the time, as it meant anyone could identify young troublemakers because they'd be covered in bruises.

One common punishment for pesky Egyptian kids was to put them in **the stocks**. These were wooden blocks with holes for their feet to keep the little terrors in one place so they couldn't run away when people came to jeer at them. I think I'd rather be given an ASBO, wouldn't you?



But that was nothing compared with what happened to you if your dad was a soldier and he ran away from the army. Then your whole family would be thrown in prison, and you'd have to stay there for weeks or months or even years till he came back.

Yes, Egyptian law-makers could be pretty tough!



An Egyptian happy family all hoping Dad doesn't do anything illegal

This is what they did to your dad if he stole an animal from the temple:

How to Skewer an Ancient Egyptian Criminal

1. *Take a long, sharpened bit of wood. Make sure it's nice and sturdy, with a decent point at one end.*
2. *Bury the blunt end in the ground firmly. Make sure it doesn't wiggle around.*
3. *Hold the prisoner up so his belly button is over the point. Then drop him quickly so the stick goes all the way through and out the other side.*
4. *Leave for several days, or until everyone's had a good look. Don't worry if he doesn't die straight away. That's perfectly normal.*

If seeing this happen to your dad wasn't bad enough, you and your entire family would then be handed over to the temple to work as slaves for the rest of your lives.