WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An infectious arenavirus viral vector, wherein an arenavirus open reading frame is removed and replaced by a nucleotide sequence selected from the group consisting of:

a. a nucleotide sequence encoding an HBV pre-S2/S protein or an antigenic fragment thereof;

b. a nucleotide sequence encoding an HBV HBc protein or an antigenic fragment thereof;

c. a nucleotide sequence encoding an HBV polymerase protein or an antigenic fragment thereof;

d. a nucleotide sequence encoding a fusion of HBV HBs and HBc proteins or antigenic fragments thereof; and

e. a nucleotide sequence encoding an HBV HBe protein or an antigenic fragment thereof.

2. The viral vector of claim 1 wherein the pre-S2/S protein or the antigenic fragment thereof comprises an amino acid sequence that is 80%, 81%, 82%, 83%, 84%, 85%, 86%, 87%, 88%, 89%, 90%, 91%, 92%, 93%, 94%, 95%, 96%, 97%, 98%, 99%, or 100% identical to an amino acid sequence encoded by the nucleotide sequence of SEQ ID NO: 1.

3. The viral vector of claim 1 wherein the HBc protein or the antigenic fragment thereof comprises an amino acid sequence that is 80%, 81%, 82%, 83%, 84%, 85%, 86%, 87%, 88%, 89%, 90%, 91%, 92%, 93%, 94%, 95%, 96%, 97%, 98%, 99%, or 100% identical to an amino acid sequence encoded by the nucleotide sequence of SEQ ID NO: 2.

4. The viral vector of claim 1 wherein fusion of HBV HBs and HBc proteins or antigenic fragments thereof comprises an amino acid sequence that is 80%, 81%, 82%, 83%, 84%, 85%, 86%, 87%, 88%, 89%, 90%, 91%, 92%, 93%, 94%, 95%, 96%, 97%, 98%, 99%, or 100% identical to an amino acid sequence encoded by the nucleotide sequence of SEQ ID NO: 3.

5. The viral vector of claim 1 wherein the HBe protein or the antigenic fragment thereof comprises an amino acid sequence that is 80%, 81%, 82%, 83%, 84%, 85%, 86%,

87%, 88%, 89%, 90%, 91%, 92%, 93%, 94%, 95%, 96%, 97%, 98%, 99%, or 100% identical to an amino acid sequence encoded by the nucleotide sequence of SEQ ID NO: 26.

6. The viral vector of claim 1 comprising at least two of:

a. a nucleotide sequence encoding an HBV pre-S2/S protein or an antigenic fragment thereof;

b. a nucleotide sequence encoding an HBV HBc protein or an antigenic fragment thereof;

c. a nucleotide sequence encoding an HBV polymerase protein or an antigenic fragment thereof;

d. a nucleotide sequence encoding a fusion of HBV HBs and HBc proteins or antigenic fragments thereof; and

e. a nucleotide sequence encoding an HBV HBe protein or an antigenic fragment thereof.

7. The viral vector of claim 1 comprising at least three of:

a. a nucleotide sequence encoding an HBV pre-S2/S protein or an antigenic fragment thereof;

b. a nucleotide sequence encoding an HBV HBc protein or an antigenic fragment thereof;

c. a nucleotide sequence encoding an HBV polymerase protein or an antigenic fragment thereof;

d. a nucleotide sequence encoding a fusion of HBV HBs and HBc proteins or antigenic fragments thereof; and

e. a nucleotide sequence encoding an HBV HBe protein or an antigenic fragment thereof.

8. The viral vector of claim 6 or 7 wherein expression of the nucleotide sequences produces an antigenic protein complex that elicits higher titers of neutralizing antibodies than expression of the antigenic protein complex components individually.

9. The viral vector of any one of the preceding claims wherein the arenavirus is lymphocytic choriomeningitis virus, Junin virus, or Pichinde virus.

10. The viral vector of any one of the preceding claims wherein the open reading frame that encodes the glycoprotein of the arenavirus is deleted or functionally inactivated.

11. The viral vector of any one of claims 1 to 8, wherein the arenavirus is lymphocytic choriomeningitis virus, and wherein the open reading frame that encodes the glycoprotein of the arenavirus is deleted.

12. The viral vector of any one of the preceding claims wherein the genomic information encoding the infectious arenavirus viral vector is derived from the lymphocytic choriomeningitis virus Clone 13 strain.

13. The viral vector of any one of claims 1 to 11 wherein the genomic information encoding the infectious arenavirus viral vector is derived from the lymphocytic choriomeningitis virus MP strain.

14. The viral vector of any one of the preceding claims wherein the viral vector comprises a genomic segment, wherein the genomic segment comprises a nucleotide sequence that is at least 90%, 91%, 92%, 93%, 94%, 95%, 96%, 97%, 98%, at least 99%, or 100% identical to the sequence of nucleotide 1639 to 3315 of SEQ ID NO: 11 or 1640 to 3316 of SEQ ID NO: 12.

15. The viral vector of any one of the preceding claims wherein the viral vector comprises a genomic segment comprising a nucleotide sequence encoding an expression product whose amino acid sequence is at least 90%, 91%, 92%, 93%, 94%, 95%, 96%, 97%, 98%, at least 99%, or 100% identical to the amino acid sequence encoded by 1639 to 3315 of SEQ ID NO: 11 or 1640 to 3316 of SEQ ID NO: 12.

16. The viral vector of any one of the preceding claims wherein the arenavirus is bisegmented and replication-deficient.

17. The viral vector of any one of claims 1 to 9 or 12 to 15, wherein the arenavirus is trisegmented and replication-competent.

18. The viral vector of any one of claims 1 to 17, wherein the growth or infectivity of the arenavirus is not affected by the nucleotide sequence.

19. A pharmaceutical composition comprising a viral vector of any one of the preceding claims and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

20. An immunogenic composition comprising a viral vector of any one of claims 1 to 18 and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

21. A vaccine comprising a viral vector of any one of claims 1 to 18 and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

22. Use of a viral vector of any one of claims 1 to 18, the pharmaceutical composition of claim 19, the immunogenic composition of claim 20, or the vaccine of claim 21 in the manufacture of a medicament for treating or preventing a Hepatitis B virus infection in a patient, wherein the medicament is to be administered to the patient.

23. A viral vector of any one of claims 1 to 18, the pharmaceutical composition of claim 19, the immunogenic composition of claim 20, or the vaccine of claim 21 for use in the treatment or prevention of a Hepatitis B virus infection in a patient.

24. The viral vector of any one of claims 1 to 18, the pharmaceutical composition of claim 19, the immunogenic composition of claim 20, or the vaccine of claim 21 for use according to claim 23 wherein the viral vector, pharmaceutical composition, immunogenic composition or vaccine is suitable for intramuscular injection.

25. The viral vector of any one of claims 1 to 18, the pharmaceutical composition of claim 19, the immunogenic composition of claim 20, or the vaccine of claim 21 for use according to claim 23 wherein the viral vector, pharmaceutical composition, immunogenic composition or vaccine is suitable for intravenous injection.

26. An isolated nucleic acid, wherein the nucleic acid comprises an arenavirus genomic segment wherein one open reading frame of the genomic segment is deleted or functionally inactivated and wherein the genomic segment comprises one or more of:

a. a nucleotide sequence encoding an HBV pre-S2/S protein or an antigenic fragment thereof;

b. a nucleotide sequence encoding an HBV HBc protein or an antigenic fragment thereof;

c. a nucleotide sequence encoding an HBV polymerase protein or an antigenic fragment thereof;

d. a nucleotide sequence encoding a fusion of HBV HBs and HBc proteins or antigenic fragments thereof; and

e. a nucleotide sequence encoding an HBV HBe protein or an antigenic fragment thereof.

27. The isolated nucleic acid of claim 26, wherein the genomic segment is the short segment, wherein the open reading frame encoding the glycoprotein is deleted.

28. A method for generating an infectious, replication-deficient arenavirus viral vector comprising:

(a) transfecting into a host cell the nucleic acid of claim 26 or 27;

(b) maintaining the host cell under conditions suitable for virus formation; and

(c) harvesting the infectious, replication-deficient arenavirus viral vector;

wherein the host cell expresses the open reading frame that is deleted or functionally inactivated of the genomic segment.

29. The arenavirus viral vector of claim 1, wherein the arenavirus open reading frame is the glycoprotein open reading frame.

30. The use of claim 22, wherein the medicament induces a long-lasting immune response against the HBV antigen or an antigenic fragment thereof.

31. The use of claim 30, wherein the long-lasting immune response induces a detectable antibody titer against an HBV antigen or an antigenic fragment thereof.

32. The use of claim 30, wherein the long-lasting immune response induces a detectable antibody titer against the HBV antigen or an antigenic fragment thereof for at least a minimum of 4 weeks.

33. The use of claim 31 or 32, wherein the long lasting immune response increases the antibody titer against the HBV antigen or an antigenic fragment thereof by at least 100%, at least 200%, at least 300%, at least 400%, at least 500%, or at least 1000% compared to the antibody titer in the sera of a human subject infected with an HBV infection prior to induction of such long-lasting immune response.

34. A pharmaceutical composition comprising a first infectious, replication-deficient arenavirus viral vector engineered to contain a genome with the ability to amplify and express its genetic information in infected cells but unable to produce further infectious progeny particles in normal, not genetically engineered cells, wherein one arenavirus open reading frame is removed and replaced by a first nucleotide sequence selected from the group consisting of:

a. a nucleotide sequence encoding an HBV pre-S2/S protein or an antigenic fragment thereof;

b. a nucleotide sequence encoding an HBV HBc protein or an antigenic fragment thereof;

c. a nucleotide sequence encoding an HBV polymerase protein or an antigenic fragment thereof;

d. a nucleotide sequence encoding a fusion of HBV HBs and HBc proteins or antigenic fragments thereof; and

e. a nucleotide sequence encoding an HBV HBe protein or an antigenic fragment thereof;

and a second infectious, replication-deficient arenavirus viral vector engineered to contain a genome with the ability to amplify and express its genetic information in infected cells but unable to produce further infectious progeny particles in normal, not genetically engineered cells, wherein one arenavirus open reading frame is removed and replaced by a second nucleotide sequence selected from the group consisting of:

a. a nucleotide sequence encoding an HBV pre-S2/S protein or an antigenic fragment thereof;

b. a nucleotide sequence encoding an HBV HBc protein or an antigenic fragment thereof;

c. a nucleotide sequence encoding an HBV polymerase protein or an antigenic fragment thereof;

d. a nucleotide sequence encoding a fusion of HBV HBs and HBc proteins or antigenic fragments thereof; and

e. a nucleotide sequence encoding an HBV HBe protein or an antigenic fragment thereof.

35. The pharmaceutical composition of claim 34, wherein the first and second nucleotide sequences are different.

36. The pharmaceutical composition of claim 34 or 35, wherein the first nucleotide sequence encodes the HBV pre-S2/S protein or fragment thereof, and wherein the second nucleotide sequence encodes the HBV HBc protein or a fragment thereof.

37. The pharmaceutical composition of claim 34 or 35, wherein the first nucleotide sequence encodes the HBV pre-S2/S protein or fragment thereof, and wherein the second nucleotide sequence encodes the fusion of the HBV HBs and HBc proteins or fragments thereof.

38. The pharmaceutical composition of claim 34 or 35, wherein the first nucleotide sequence encodes the HBV HBc protein or fragment thereof, and wherein the second nucleotide sequence encodes the HBe protein or a fragments thereof.

39. The pharmaceutical composition of claim 34 or 35, wherein the first nucleotide sequence encodes the HBV pre-S2/S protein or fragment thereof, and wherein the second nucleotide sequence encodes the HBV HBe protein or a fragment thereof.

40. The pharmaceutical composition of claim 34 or 35, wherein the first nucleotide sequence encodes the HBV HBe protein or fragment thereof, and wherein the second nucleotide sequence encodes the fusion of the HBV HBs and HBc proteins or fragments thereof.

41. The pharmaceutical composition of claim 34 or 35, wherein the first nucleotide sequence encodes the HBV polymerase protein or fragment thereof, and wherein the second nucleotide sequence encodes the HBV HBe protein or a fragment thereof.

42. The pharmaceutical composition of claim 34 or 35, wherein the first nucleotide sequence encodes the HBV pre-S2/S protein or fragment thereof, and wherein the second nucleotide sequence encodes the HBV polymerase protein or a fragment thereof.

43. The pharmaceutical composition of claim 34 or 35, wherein the first nucleotide sequence encodes the HBV polymerase protein or fragment thereof, and wherein the second nucleotide sequence encodes the HBV HBc protein or a fragment thereof.

44. The pharmaceutical composition of claim 34 or 35, wherein the first nucleotide sequence encodes the fusion of the HBV HBc and HBs proteins or fragments thereof, and wherein the second nucleotide sequence encodes the HBV polymerase protein or a fragment thereof.

45. The pharmaceutical composition of any one of claims 34 to 44, wherein the composition is suitable for intramuscular administration.

46. The pharmaceutical composition of any one of claims 34 to 44, wherein the composition is suitable for intravenous administration.

47. The method of claim 28 wherein the method further comprises in step a. transfecting into the host cell: a cDNA of the second arenavirus genomic segment, a nucleic acid comprising the L protein ORF, and/or a nucleic acid comprising the NP protein ORF.

48. The use of claim 22, wherein the medicament results in a reduction in liver damage in the patient.

49. The use of claim 22, wherein the medicament results in a reduction in one or more of HBsAg, HBeAg, and HBcAg levels in the blood of the patient.

50. The use of claim 22, wherein the medicament results in a reduction in the level of an antibody against an HBV antigen in the blood of the patient.

51. The viral vector of claim 1, wherein the pre-S2/S protein or the antigenic fragment thereof comprises an amino acid sequence encoded by the nucleotide sequence of SEQ ID NO: 1.

52. The viral vector of claim 1, wherein the HBc protein or the antigenic fragment thereof comprises an amino acid sequence encoded by the nucleotide sequence of SEQ ID NO: 2.

53. The viral vector of claim 1, wherein fusion of HBV HBs and HBc proteins or antigenic fragments thereof comprises an amino acid sequence encoded by the nucleotide sequence of SEQ ID NO: 3.

54. The pharmaceutical composition of claim 34, wherein the genomic information encoding the first infectious arenavirus viral vector is derived from LCMV and the genomic information encoding the second infectious arenavirus viral vector is derived from Junin virus or Pichinde virus.

55. The pharmaceutical composition of claim 34, wherein the genomic information encoding the first infectious arenavirus viral vector is derived from Junin virus or Pichinde virus and the genomic information encoding the second infectious arenavirus viral vector is derived from LCMV.

56. The viral vector of any one of claims 1 to 18, wherein the arenavirus is replication-deficient and is engineered to contain a genome with the ability to amplify and express its genetic information in infected cells but unable to produce further infectious progeny particles in normal, not genetically engineered cells.

57. The viral vector of any one of claims 1 to 9, wherein the arenavirus is replication-competent.

58. The viral vector of claim 1, wherein the arenavirus is bisegmented.

59. The viral vector of any one of claims 1 to 18, wherein the arenavirus is trisegmented.

60. An infectious arenavirus viral vector, wherein an arenavirus open reading frame is removed and replaced by a nucleotide sequence encoding a fusion of HBV HBs and HBc proteins or antigenic fragments thereof.

61. The viral vector of claim 60, wherein the arenavirus is lymphocytic choriomeningitis virus.

62. The viral vector of claim 60 or 61, wherein the open reading frame that encodes the glycoprotein of the arenavirus is deleted or functionally inactivated.

63. The viral vector of any one of claims 60 to 62, wherein the viral vector is replication-deficient.

64. The viral vector of claim 60 or 61, wherein the viral vector is replication-competent.

65. The viral vector of any one of claims 60, 61, and 64, wherein the viral vector is trisegmented.

66. Use of a viral vector of any one of claims 60 to 65 in the manufacture of a medicament for treating or preventing a Hepatitis B virus infection in a patient, wherein the medicament is to be administered to the patient.