Hammurabi was the ruler who chiefly established the greatness of Babylon, the world's first metropolis. Many relics of Hammurabi's reign ([1795-1750 BC]) have been preserved, and today we can study this remarkable King...as a wise law-giver in his celebrated code. . .

By far the most remarkable of the Hammurabi records is his code of laws, the earliest-known example of a ruler proclaiming publicly to his people an entire body of laws, arranged in orderly groups, so that all men might read and know what was required of them. The code was carved upon a black stone monument, eight feet high, and clearly intended to be reared in public view. This noted stone was found in the year 1901, not in Babylon, but in a city of the Persian mountains, to which some later conqueror must have carried it in triumph. It begins and ends with addresses to the gods. Even a law code was in those days regarded as a subject for prayer, though the prayers here are chiefly cursings of whoever shall neglect or destroy the law.

The code then regulates in clear and definite strokes the organization of society. The judge who blunders in a law case is to be expelled from his judgeship forever, and heavily fined. The witness who testifies falsely is to be slain. Indeed, all the heavier crimes are made punishable with death. Even if a man builds a house badly, and it falls and kills the owner, the builder is to be slain. If the owner's son was killed, then the builder's son is slain. We can see where the Hebrews learned their law of "an eye for an eye." These grim retaliatory punishments take no note of excuses or explanations, but only of the fact—with one striking exception. An accused person was allowed to cast himself into "the river," the Euphrates. Apparently the art of swimming was unknown; for if the current bore him to the shore alive he was declared innocent, if he drowned he was guilty. So we learn that faith in the justice of the ruling gods was already firmly, though somewhat childishly, established in the minds of men.

Yet even with this earliest set of laws, as with most things Babylonian, we find ourselves dealing with the end of things rather than the beginnings. Hammurabi's code was not really the earliest. The preceding sets of laws have disappeared, but we have found several traces of them, and Hammurabi's own code clearly implies their existence. He is but reorganizing a legal system long established.

http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/hamcode.html
Hammurabi’s Code
The following laws have been “translated” from the original text into an easy to understand vernacular. Please read and answer the questions at the end of this reading assignment.

1. If a person accuses another person of a crime, the accused shall go to the river and jump in. If he drowns, the person who accused him may have the accused person's house. If the accused doesn't drown, then the River-God has decided that he is innocent. The person who made the accusation is to be put to death, and the accused shall take his house.

2. If anyone opens his ditches to water his crop, but is careless, and the water floods the field of his neighbor, then he shall pay his neighbor corn for his loss.

3. If he be not able to replace the corn, then he and his possessions shall be divided among the farmers whose corn he has flooded.

4. If a physician kills a patient or cuts out a patient's eye when trying to remove a tumor, the physicians' hands will be cut off.

5. If a builder builds a house and the house collapses and kills the owner of the house, the builder shall be put to death. If the house collapses and kills the owner's son, then the son of the builder shall be put to death.

6. If a son hits his father, his hands shall be cut off.

7. If a fire breaks out in a house and a person who helps to put out the fire steals something from the house, that person shall be thrown into the fire.

8. If a man destroys the eye of another man, his eye shall be destroyed. If he breaks the bone of another, his bone shall be broken.

9. If a man's wife, who lives in his house, wishes to leave it, plunges into debt, tries to ruin her house, neglects her husband, and is found guilty: if her husband offer her release, she may go on her way, and he gives her nothing as a gift of release. If her husband does not wish to release her, and if he take another wife, she shall remain as a servant in her husband's house.

10. If a man wishes to divorce his wife, he must return her dowry and give her the use of part of his field for farming and part of his property so that she can provide for her children.

11. If a man's wife becomes sick, the husband may take a second wife, but must continue to care for the sick wife as long as she lives.

12. If a person steals from a temple or takes goods stolen from the temple, he shall be put to death.
A Selection from the Code of Hammurabi

Below is a selection of laws from the Code of Hammurabi in the original translation.

13. If a judge try a case, reach a decision, and present his judgment in writing; if later error shall appear in his decision, and it be through his own fault, then he shall pay twelve times the fine set by him in the case, and he shall be publicly removed from the judge's bench, and never again shall he sit there to render judgment.

14. If any one owe a debt for a loan, and a storm prostrates the grain, or the harvest fail, or the grain does not grow for lack of water; in that year he need not give his creditor any grain, he washes his debt-tablet in water and pays no rent for this year.

15. If any one be too lazy to keep his dam in proper condition, and does not so keep it; if then the dam break and all the fields be flooded, then shall he in whose dam the break occurred be sold for money, and the money shall replace the corn which he has caused to be ruined.

16. If any one give another silver, gold, or anything else to keep, he shall show everything to some witness, draw up a contract, and then hand it over for safe keeping.

17. If any one place his property with another for safe keeping, and there, either through thieves or robbers, his property and the property of the other man be lost, the owner of the house, through whose neglect the loss took place, shall compensate the owner for all that was given to him in charge. But the owner of the house shall try to follow up and recover his property, and take it away from the thief.

18. If a man put out the eye of another man, his eye shall be put out.

19. If any one strike the body of a man higher in rank than he, he shall receive sixty blows with an ox-whip in public.

20. If a man take a wife, and she be seized by disease, if he then desire to take a second wife he shall not put away his wife, who has been attacked by disease, but he shall keep her in the house which he has built and support her so long as she lives.

21. If a builder build a house for some one, even though he has not yet completed it; if then the walls seem toppling, the builder must make the walls solid from his own means.

22. If a builder build a house for some one, and does not construct it properly, and the house which he built fall in and kill its owner, then that builder shall be put to death.

23. If a veterinary surgeon perform a serious operation on an ass or an ox, and cure it, the owner shall pay the surgeon one-sixth of a shekel as a fee.

24. If he perform a serious operation on an ass or ox, and kill it, he shall pay the owner one-fourth of its value.
Choose 5 of Hammurabi's Laws that are listed above. For each law you select tell me:

(1) Who is the law directed at?
(2) What does the law say to do or not do?
(3) What are the stated consequences of complying or not complying with the law?
(4) Does a similar law exist in America today? If so, explain the similarity. Most of these do have some connections to modern laws. This will require you to think outside the box. Please do not just write “No” for every answer.