The following laws were decreed:

1. The king must never appear in public except when the occasion is extremely important and unavoidable.
2. Only the king may wear a golden diadem [crown] in the city, though in war all the great lords and brave captains may wear this (but on no other occasion)...
3. Only the king and the prime minister Tlacaelel may wear sandals within the palace.... Noblemen are the only ones to be allowed to wear sandals in the city and no one else, also under pain of death, with the exception of men who have performed some great feat in war....
4. Only the king is to wear the final mantles [cloaks] of cotton brocaded with designs and threats of different colors and adorned with featherwork....
5. The great lords, who are twelve, may wear special mantles of certain make and design, and the minor lords, according to their valor and accomplishments, may wear others.
6. The common soldiers are permitted to wear only the simplest type of mantle. They are prohibited from using any special designs that might set them off from the rest.
7. The commoners will not be allowed to wear cotton clothing, under pain of death, but can use only garments of maguey fiber [fibers from the agave plant that is common to Mexico]....
8. Only the great noblemen and valiant warriors are given license to build a house with a second story; for disobeying this law a person receives the death penalty....
9. Only the great lords are to wear labrets [lip piercings], and nose plugs of gold and precious stones, except for commoners who are strong men, brave captains, and soldiers, but their labrets, ear plugs, and nose plugs must be of bone, wood, or other inferior material of little value....
10. In the royal palace there are to be diverse rooms where different classes of people are to be received, and under pain of death no one is to enter that of the great lords or to mix with those men (unless of that class himself)....
11. An order of judges is to be established, beginning with the judges of the supreme council. After these would come regular court judges, municipal judges, district officials, constables, and councilmen, although none of them may give the death sentence without notifying the king. Only the sovereign can sentence someone to death or pardon him....
12. All the neighborhoods will possess schools or monasteries for young men where they will learn religion and correct comportment [conduct]. They are to do penance [repentance of sins], lead hard lives, live with strict morality, practice for warfare, do physical work, fast, endure disciplinary measures, draw blood from different parts of the body, and keep watch at night. There are to be teachers and old men to correct them and chastise them and lead them in their exercises and take care that they are not idle, do not lose their time. All of these youth must observe chastity [abstinence from sexual activity] in the strictest way, under pain of death.
13. There is to be a rigorous law regarding adulterers. They are to be stoned and thrown into the rivers or to the buzzards.
14. Thieves will be sold for the price of their theft, unless the theft be grave, having been committed many times. Such thieves will be punished by death.
15. Great privileges and exemptions are to be given to those who dedicate themselves to religion, to the temples and the gods. Priests will be awarded great distinction, reverence, and authority.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS:

1. What do Great Speaker Moctezuma’s laws tell us about the social and moral values of the Aztecs?

2. Based on this primary source, how would you describe Aztec society? What distinct social groups or classes can you identify? How were they distinguished from one another? What opportunities for social mobility were available?