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**JUSTICE AND MERCY IN *THE MERCHANT OF VENICE***

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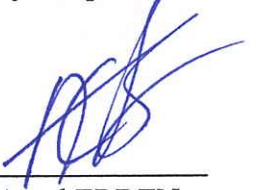
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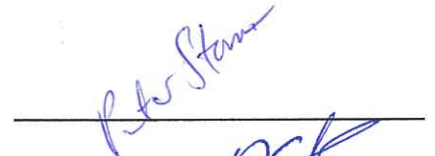


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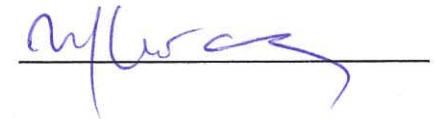
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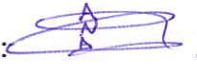
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## ABSTRACT

### JUSTICE AND MERCY IN *THE MERCHANT OF VENICE*

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This thesis deals with the concepts of justice and mercy in *The Merchant of Venice*, especially in the characters of Shylock and Portia. The Jew, who seeks for revenge through using justice to achieve his desire, and Portia, who shows a lot of mercy to Shylock, till her turning point in the court, that led to change the destiny of many characters. There is a special part in the introduction which is dealing with Greek philosophy, mythology, and law about justice and mercy, in addition to a quick reading of *The Tempest* in order to see how much 'mercy' is valuable according to Shakespeare. Chapter I contains the religious concepts of justice and mercy. It is about comparing the doctrines of *The Bible* and *The Torah* with the behaviors and acts of the characters. The Chapter also contains a Shakespearean view of different perspectives concerning the Christians and Jews, in addition to the circumstances of Jewish life in Europe. Chapter IV contains the imagery of Justice and Mercy in *The Merchant of Venice*.

**KEY WORDS:** Shylock, Justice, Judaism, Portia, Mercy, Christianity.

## ÖZET

### *VENEDİK TACİRİ ESERİNDEKİ ADALET VE MERHAMET*

Anas Yas

İngiliz Edebiyatı ve Kültür Çalışmaları Bölümü, Yüksek Lisans

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Bu tez Venedik Taciri eserinde bilhassa Shylock ve Portia karakterlerindeki adalet ve merhamet kavramlarını ele almaktadır. Yahudi kendi arzusunu gerçekleştirmek için adaleti kullanmakta, Portia ise mahkemedeki dönüş noktasına kadar Shylock'a çok fazla merhamet göstermektedir. Giriş bölümünde Yunan felsefesi, mitoloji ve adalet ve merhamet hakkındaki yasaları ele alan özel bir bölüm bulunmaktadır. Sheakespeare'e göre "merhamet" in ne kadar değerli olduğunu görmek için Fırtına adlı esere de kısaca değinilmektedir. 1'inci bölüm adalet ve merhametin dini kavramlarını içermektedir. Bu bölüm karakterlerin davranış ve eylemleriyle İncil ve Tevrat'ın doktrinlerinin karşılaştırılmasını hakkındadır. Yine bu bölüm, ayrıca, Hristiyanlar ve Yahudilerle ilgili farklı perspektiflere Shakespeareci bir bakışın yanı sıra Avrupa'daki Yahudi yaşamının içinde bulunduğu durumu da içermektedir. 4'üncü bölümde Venedik Taciri'ndeki adalet ve merhamet imgelemi anlatılmaktadır.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Shylock, Adalet, Yahudilik, Portia, Merhamet, Hristiyanlık.

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## INTRODUCTION

*The Merchant of Venice* is a very controversial play. It contains many delicate themes. The issues of historical facts, religion, politics, and racism all contribute to the content of the play. The play was written in 1596 by William Shakespeare, who reflects the conflict between Christian merchants and Jewish moneylenders in Venice. The play also deals with another conflict which is between justice and mercy. If one reads *The Merchant of Venice*, then has a look on the historical background of the Jews in Europe in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century, he will immediately see such themes as Justice, Judaism, and the Jews represented by Shylock, standing in opposition to other themes as Mercy, Christianity, and the Christians represented by Portia. This thesis will discuss these themes which will deal, in one hand, with the life situations' of the Jews in Europe, and it will discuss the character of Shylock and his legal bond. On the other hand, it will deal with the character of Portia, her merciful voice, and her turning point in the court.

The play is full of scenes of emotion and love, scenes of cruelty and hatred and also self sacrifice. The reader of *The Merchant of Venice* is led to change his point of view causing a shift in his feelings many times. Sometimes he will sympathize with the villain and hate the protagonist and vice versa. The play causes a mixture of feelings that confuse the reader. It puts him in a wondering position whether Shylock is the absolute villain and Antonio is the ultimate angel or the vice versa. Concerning the film version of the play, the last production of *The Merchant of Venice* in 2004 by Michael Radford as the director reflects a different interpretation in which Shylock is portrayed as a victim of the Christian society<sup>1</sup>.



Justice and mercy are the two concepts which will be discussed in this thesis. They are completely contradictory words. If someone wants to adopt the value of justice, he should not yield to emotions and he should not be merciful. On the other hand, if a man shows mercy he will not comply with the law, because mercy usually means taking the decision from emotion. One can notice many features and flaws in justice and mercy, for example, justice is better than mercy in the concept of totalitarianism. Justice can apply to every man, because the law should be above all people and it should apply to the weak and the strong alike, whereas mercy can apply to specific people, like giving money to a beggar or helping a weak man. Mercy is always associated with feelings and emotions rather than reasoning.

As it well known, Shakespearean tradition has given the name 'comedy' on the basis of whether the play has a happy ending or not, therefore, the play is classified as a comedy, but it is hard to judge whether it is a comedy or dark comedy. Some Shakespearean works can be classified easily as a tragedy, like *Othello* and *Julius Caesar*, while some others can be classified easily as comedies like *Twelfth Night*. The play has a serious tone and it comes closer to tragedy as seen mostly in the trial scene, where the life of Antonio is at stake. Comedy is also presented in many places, like the story of three caskets and the characters of the unsuitable suitors. The happy ending of the play can bring one into a state of illusion. It can make one believe that the play is Comedy. What is important to notice is that the play not only finishes with a happy ending, but also it ends sadly for Shylock. The last appearance of Shylock in the play is when he loses his money, his daughter, and even his religion in the court. The play also contains many romantic scenes, in addition to the form of comedy and dark comedy, therefore there is a loss in the label of play classification, whether it is comedy, dark comedy, or a romantic comedy.

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<sup>1</sup>see page 26

However, *The Merchant of Venice* is a very important and troubling play. Some views speculated that the play was written in the Lenten month, because for Christians this month has many features, as Halio mentions "more pertinent, perhaps, are the thematic suggestions of ritual sacrifice, God's mercy, and the grace of love" (Halio 1993: 59-60) these views can support the idea that the play has wide popularity, in the first years of its publishing, and gained the acceptance of the thoughts of Shakespeare's time especially over the issue of Jews.

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### **Justice as philosophical concept**

It is impossible to understand Western literature, particularly Renaissance works, without referring to the mythologies, ancient stories, great characters, immortal wars, and controversial philosophies of the Greeks. It is one of the oldest civilizations having emerged in the 8th century BC. Justice and mercy are two themes that have been dealt with a lot in the Greek mythologies and philosophies.

Traditionally, the Greek conception of justice came from poets like Hesiod, who regards justice as a set of acts that must be followed. The reason for being just, was associated with the legends of Zeus concerning reward and punishment. Zeus, the god of sky in the Greek mythology, rewards those who are good and punishes those who are bad.

Justice is a word that is strongly associated with laws, because states claim to base their legitimacy on their ability to offer justice. One of the oldest and the most important discussions about the concept of justice is the discussion of Socrates which is published in Plato's book *Republic*. Plato wrote *Republic* after the death of Socrates, which means that this conversation occurred during the life of Socrates, C. 469 BC – 399 BC). Through this discussion one can know many different definitions of Justice which are still debated today. This part of *Republic* can be regarded as a major philosophical reference point for the concept of Justice.

Plato's dialogue takes place in the first book, and is set in the house of Cephalus near Athens. Socrates meets with other philosophers, sophists, and students. During the session Socrates gives his opinions, thoughts and explanations about justice. His friends listen to him unconvinced. Some of them give Socrates an opposite opinion, while others ask him questions. The main question comes from Thrasymachus when he asks him that why one should be just. If the unjust is mostly the winner and justice is the will of the stronger, why people must be on the just side?

Socrates gives himself the further task, when he sits among his friends, of explaining the benefits of justice. He should not only give a clear definition of justice, but also prove that justice is a desirable thing. Usually, this kind of questions has two answers, as Stephen Watt mentions "The deontological answer is broadly that if an act is right, it just should be done," while "the alternative deontological or consequentialist answer is that you should only perform just actions if they produce good consequences" (Watt 1997: XII).

Justice is being honest and it is a repayment of a debt. With these words Cephalus gives the first definition of justice, based on the definition of Simonides<sup>2</sup> when he said that justice is "speaking the truth and restoring what one has received." (Plato, 1997, 330e-331d) Socrates refutes this definition completely, and cites the argument that one should not hand back a weapon to a madman.

every one, I suppose, would admit that if a man, while in the possession of his senses, were to place dangerous weapons in the hand of a friend, and afterwards in a fit of madness to demand them back, such a deposit ought not to be restored (Plato, 1997, 330e-331d).

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<sup>2</sup>Simonides was a Greek lyric poet (c. 556–468 BC)

Cephalus and Polymachus agree with Socrates that giving back a weapon to a madman is an unjust act, because he can threaten people's life. Meanwhile Polymarchus suggests a new definition of justice in order to re-explain Simonides's definition. "Then by justice Simonides means doing good to our friends, and harm to our enemies" (Plato, 1997: 332c-333a). This definition makes one remember Shylock's concept of justice which is based on the idea of 'an eye for an eye'. This concept makes Shylock a revenger person who deals with usury and seeks for revenge. Dealing with usury is like a reaction or 'an eye for an eye' to the law of Venice that prevents Jews to own property in the city. That is why, usury for the Jew is like a kind of lifestyle in Venice. Also the bond and Shylock's desire of revenge are based on 'an eye for an eye' as it's explained in Chapter II about the reasons of antagonism between Shylock and Antonio. Anyway, Socrates was not convinced by this definition too. He said that not all our friends are virtuous and not all our enemies are evil, so in this case one may help the bad and harm the good. Socrates adds, that justice is related with the issue of good and evil, so instead of saying that justice is "doing good to our friends, and harm to our enemies" (Plato, 1997, 332c-333a) one should say that it is doing good to our friends\_when they are good, and doing evil to our enemies\_when they are evil.

Thrasymachus interrupts Socrates and Polemarchus angrily. He says that justice is nothing more than the advantage of the stronger. "justice is simply the interest of the stronger" (Plato, 1997, 338b-339a) Thrasymachus explains his definition perfectly, saying that justice is mass of laws which is set by the stronger, for example, governments or rulers, and these governments will set laws that support their advantages. A government makes a democratic, an aristocratic, or a tyrannic law with a view to its advantage, and when someone goes against the law he will be punished as an unjust man. Thrasymachus thinks that it is better for people to seek about their own interest rather than follow the rules of right and wrong. Thrasymachus always wants to diminish the importance of law. He seems to have little respect for law when he said that it is merely the law of the dominant interest group. In *The Merchant of Venice*, one can find this kind of disrespecting for law in the character of Shylock. As a foreigner, Shylock does not regard the law of Venice as his law that he should follow, therefore he always uses the phrase 'your law' to

refer to the law of Venice; "If you deny me, fie upon your law!" (IV. i. 100). Shylock despises the law of Venice, because the word 'fie' in Shakespearean language means an exclamation of disgust.

After the speech of Thrasymachus, Socrates should not only define justice but also he should prove that justice is a useful and desirable value. One should prove justice for the justice's sake only, and not for anything else like gaining advantages. First of all, Socrates tells Thrasymachus that rulers are human beings, and they are not infallible. They usually make mistakes, but Thrasymachus immediately responds him saying that a man who makes a mistake in ruling is not qualified to judge, because mistakes basically come from ignorance. Mistakes can only occur when a man's knowledge of his craft is incomplete.

No craftsman errs. For it is through a failure of knowledge that a man errs, and to that extent he is no craftsman, (Plato, 1997, 340d-341c)

Socrates argues that, just as the art of the physician cannot be to cause illness, the art of just man cannot be to harm. Socrates also sees that Thrasymachus's definition of justice is incorrect because it portrays injustice as a virtue. Life is seen as a continual competition to get more (more money, more power, etc.) and the great virtue will be with the man who is most successful in the competition. Socrates replies that injustice cannot be a virtue, and justice is a virtue of the soul.

To which class does justice belong? This is the question of Glaucon (one of Socrates's young friends). He was not satisfied with Socrates' speech over justice. According to Glaucon all good things can be divided into three classes; things that we desire only for their advantages such as medical treatment; things that we desire only for their own sake, such as joy; and, the highest class, things we desire it both for their own sake and for what we get from them, such as, sight, and health.

Let me ask you: is there, in your opinion, a class of good things of such a kind that we are glad to possess them, not because we desire their consequences, but simply welcoming them for their own sake? Take for example the feelings of enjoyment and all those pleasures that are harmless, and that are followed by no result in the after time, beyond simple enjoyment in their possession.

Yes, I certainly think there is a class of this description.

Well, is there another class, do you think, of those which we value both for their own sake and for their results?

Such as intelligence, and sight, and health, all of which are welcome, I apprehend, on both accounts.

Yes.

And do you further recognise a third class of good things, which would include gymnastic training and submission to medical treatment in illness, as well as, the practice of medicine and all other means of making money? Things like these we should describe as irksome, and yet beneficial to us, and while we should reject them viewed simply in themselves, we accept them for the sake of the emoluments, and of the other consequences which result from them.

Yes, undoubtedly there is such a third class also: but what then?

In which of these classes do you place justice? (Plato 1997: 357a-d)

According to this classification, Socrates should prove that justice belongs to the highest class of desirable things, because Glaucon thinks that justice belongs to the first class. In fact, it is Plato's aim to show that justice is one of the highest forms, like goodness and beauty. Justice is an evil thing but one should follow or approve it in order to avoid the greater evil. Glaucon says that justice is a compromise between advantage and fear. People usually want to be unjust in order to reach to their own goals, but they are afraid of punishment. Glaucon adds that justice is created from the weakness of human beings, and all people who approve justice have no power, because if they have power, they will use it and be unjust. He supports his view with the story of the ring. According to the Greek myth, Gyges was a shepherd in the service of the king. One day "a violent storm of rain fell, the ground was rent asunder

by an earthquake," (Plato 1997: 358e-359e) Gyges went down into the ground gap and he found a gold ring which gave him invisibility. He returned to the ground as an invisible creature. By this power "he seduced the queen and conspiring with her, slew the king, and took possession of the throne." (Plato 1997: 359e-360d) When Gyges was a shepherd, he was a just man, but at the same time he was a weak man. When he found the ring and became invisible, he started to use his power in a wrong and an unjust way. Glaucon finished his speech with a competition between the two lives. How it is a pleasant and powerful life by being unjust and how it is a scorned and wretched life by being just. Then he asks Socrates to prove that justice is a desirable thing, even if there are no rewards like joy or health.

Adeimantus supports his brother view saying "If we are just we lose the gains of injustice, although we may escape the punishment of heaven. On the other hand, if we are unjust, we shall keep the gains, and by our sinning then praying then sinning, the gods will be propitiated, and we shall not be punished." (Plato 1997: 361d-362d). He thinks that no one adopts justice for the sake of justice only. People adopt justice in order to gain self advantages or rewards such as reputation. Adeimantus repeats the old question to Socrates that why one should be just as long as the unjust always gain more than the just? One can be unjust secretly to gain more power, but only there is one truth that God cannot be deceived, that is why Adeimantus adds

What if there are no gods? Or perhaps the gods do not care about human things... and even if there are gods, and they do care about us, we know of them only from tradition and the genealogies of the poets (Plato 1997: 369a-d).

Adeimantus asks Socrates to prove that justice is a desirable thing, and it is better than injustice, and one should adopt justice regardless whether he is seen by the gods and human or not.

Socrates said that the subject of justice applies to the state and individual, as long as the state is larger than the individual, so it is easier to see justice in the state rather than the individual, therefore Socrates starts to imagine or build up in his mind a perfect just city. He enacts rules about all things in his state. He talks about food, dwelling, clothing, education, warriors or as he called them "guardians", specialization ... etc.

According to religion and mythology, sacrifice and mercy are the two terms that are somehow linked to one another. There are many Greek stories over sacrificing, but it is better first to know something about the relation between mercy and sacrificing. Generally the word sacrifice means giving something valuable to show the degree of love to someone. Sacrifices are generally made as appeals to God, or in thanks to God for divine interventions. The idea of sacrificing by bodies is mentioned religiously in the New Testament "I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your body as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." (Romans 12: 1). This idea is also mentioned in the Qur'an, but in Islam sacrificing means showing how much the person loves his God by the sacrifice of any kind of livestock like sheep, ox, or cow on the day of the Great Feast. "Indeed, We have granted you, [O Muhammad], al-Kawthar. So pray to your Lord and sacrifice [to Him alone]. Indeed, your enemy is the one cut off." (Al-Kawthar 108:1-3). According to the previous speech over sacrifice, one can notice that God loves people who offer sacrifice.

The question remains about the connection between sacrifice and mercy. Generally, showing mercy can involve sacrifice, because if one shows mercy to anyone, that means that he sacrifices or waives of his right, and it means also that he forgives his enemy. In *The New Testament* there is a story of Jesus that one can somehow find a connection between mercy and sacrifice.

At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath; his disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat.

But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, "Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath."

He said to them, "Have you not read what David did, when he was hungry, and those who were with him:



How he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests?

Or have you not read in the law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are guiltless?

I tell you, something greater than the temple is here.

And if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. (Matthew 12: 1-7)

The Pharisees were blaming Jesus when they saw him eat with the sinners. The saying of Jesus that "I desire mercy and not sacrifice" can lead one to think literally about the meaning of mercy. Mercy associated with the feeling of sorrow, as Fr. Andrew Pinsent mentioned "The word 'mercy' takes its name from the Latin word 'misericordia', or 'miserum cor', which means 'a sorrowful heart'. So mercy means having a sorrowful heart for the unhappiness of another person." (Pinsent, 2008: 49). The feeling of sorrow leads Jesus to eat with the sinners, because he knows that sin can damage the relationship between the person and God, and it can also change the person to a bestial being as Fr. Andrew mentioned

This is why Jesus eating with sinners involves sacrifice, because in the eyes of the Son of God, sin is abhorrent. Sin removes a person from a family relationship with God, turning a person into something bestial or even diabolical. (Pinsent, 2008: 49)

Greek mythology, which has its connect in ancient Greek religion, has also mentioned the issue of sacrificing through the tale of Agamemnon and his daughter Iphigenia. This story occurred before the fall of Troy. All the army were ready to sail to Troy, but they were waiting for a favorable wind. Agamemnon killed his daughter for the sake of the army, as Edith Hamilton mentions

He had killed her, not willingly, but driven by the Army impatient for good wind to sail to Troy (Hamilton 1942: 352)

Iphigenia faced her destiny when The Greek soldiers came to guide her to the altar. Iphigenia prevented her mother (Clytemnestra) from following her to the altar, because it is not an easy thing for Clytemnestra to see her daughter's fate in front of her. Many years later, Agamemnon returned from Troy with a great victory, but he was waiting his destiny too. Clytemnestra "did not keep faith with her husband who had killed her child and his; she took a lover and all the people knew it." (Hamilton 1942: 353) Later on, Agamemnon was killed by Clytemnestra as a result of his sin.

Mercy is the great value that Shakespeare always wants to highlight. Justice should not be like a high fence which no one can breakthrough. According to Shakespeare, mercy can break the stiffness of law. These principles are not only applied in *The Merchant of Venice*, but also in many Shakespearean plays. If one has a quick look at *The Tempest*, he will find the same principles of *The Merchant of Venice*. Usually in plays the conspirators have one of two endings, they either die or are punished, but in *The Tempest* the plotters receive forgiveness! Prospero was the Duke of Milan, whose dukedom was usurped by his brother (Antonio) and the king of Naples (Alonso). The conspirators took the dukedom of Prospero and sent him with his daughter (Miranda) in a very old boat to face death. Accidentally, Prospero and Miranda were saved from death and reached an island which they made their home. Fortunately Prospero and Miranda were still alive with the aid of some remaining food and with books that provided Prospero power and magic. Generally, Prospero should stand on Justice and he should seek for revenge to get back his Dukedom. Initially, he expresses anger when he used his miraculous power to drown the plotters' ship and lead them to his island, but later on he forgave all the conspirators and returns with them to Milan!

I do forgive

Thy rankest fault; all of them; and require

My dukedom of thee, which perforce, I know,

Thou must restore. (V. i. 16-19).

Obviously, in *The Merchant of Venice* and in *The Tempest*, Shakespeare wants to exalt the value of mercy. He wants to deliver a message that in the consideration of justice, the aspect of mercy cannot be ignored.

## CHAPTER I

### RELIGION AS A BASIS OF CONDUCT, SEGREGATION AND THE JEWS

The concept of justice and mercy, according to religions and Shakespeare's idea about religions are important subjects in the play. Shakespeare's wide knowledge of the individual and society led him to provide the play ideas of religions and discrimination in society. When Shakespeare wrote the play, he took into account the subjects of inequalities, tensions among society's members and contrasts with the idea of religions. Shakespeare embodies all these conflicts in many scenes of the play. This chapter will highlight the religious aspect of the play, especially the *Holy Bible* and *The Torah* in order to discover the real doctrines of Christianity and Judaism about justice and mercy, and compare it with the acts of Portia and Shylock.

One can wonder why this thesis contains the doctrines of Judaism and Christianity. This debate is important not only because Shylock is a Jew and Portia and Antonio are Christians, but also because commonly one can take his decision about everything in life according to one of the two concepts, which are either enshrined in social traditions or religions. To give an example to illustrate this distinction, usually the man is thinking a lot before wearing a pink shirt because it is so common with women, whereas wearing a pink shirt is not forbidden according to religions. So, this act is wrong traditionally, not religiously. The same thing can occur with religion. Eating pork is forbidden for Muslims and Jews, because Islam and Judaism regard it as a sin, whereas pork is common in other societies that follow other religions. So, this act is wrong religiously, not traditionally.

Prohibited to you are dead animals, blood, the flesh of swine, and that which has been dedicated to other than Allah , and [those animals] killed by strangling or by a violent blow or by a head-long fall or by the goring of horns, and those from which a wild animal has eaten (Al-Mā'idah 5:3).

There are noticeable differences between the doctrines of *The Torah* and the New Testament. The doctrines of Jesus in the New Testament look somehow different from the doctrines of Moses in *The Torah*. For example, there is no one who can work on the day of the Sabbath according to Judaism, while in The New Testament of *the Holy Bible* there is a story about a man "whose right hand was withered" (Luke 6: 6). Jesus sees the man on the Sabbath and heals him. The scribes, Pharisees and Jesus are gathered to solve the problem of the man, indeed the man is healed from his illness after a speech of Jesus to the attenders, who were afraid that the man could not be cured on the Sabbath, because it is a day of rest. However, Jesus say: "unto them I will ask you one thing; Is it lawful on the Sabbath days to do good or to do evil? To save life or to destroy it?" (Luke 6: 9). There is also another story which it was mentioned in The New Testament, about the observance of the Sabbath. Jesus' disciples eat grains of wheat on the Sabbath, and the Pharisees blame him for allowing this:

At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath; his disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, "Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath." (Matthew 12: 1-2)

Jesus worked a miracle on the Sabbath, while this day is for rest only in Judaism.

More directly important in this thesis is the difference between the doctrines of *The Torah* and *the Holy Bible* over the issue of justice and mercy. Judaism's doctrines state that applying justice and fair judicial systems is necessary in all societies. Many verses in *The Torah* refer to the need of justice in the world, therefore Justice is one of the important ideas in Judaism. Christianity by contrast, is

associated with the ideas of fulfilling the law through forgiveness, and Jesus' teaches spreading peace over the world by "turning the other cheek."

But I say to you, Do not resist one who is evil. But if any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also (Matthew 5: 39).

Applying the law strictly and ignoring the idea of forgiveness are the two Jewish doctrines that *The Torah* reflects them in many verses; "Life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot" (Exodus 21: 23-24), and "Breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth" (Leviticus 24: 20). "And thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot." (Deuteronomy 19: 21). According to *The Torah*, the law should be applied without any sense of sympathy. The law must be implemented firmly, for example, throwing stones till death is a penalty of a woman who is taken in adultery, and the doctrines of Judaism cannot be tolerant. While in the New Testament of *the Holy Bible*, Jesus forgives a woman who was taken in adultery. The woman was taken to Jesus in order to be stoned as it is seen in the teachings of Moses. "Now Moses in the law commanded us that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?" (John 8:5). Jesus, the scribes and Pharisees were at the temple with the woman who sat in the midst of them. Jesus did not answer them. He just "stooped down and with his finger wrote on the ground as though he heard them not" (John 8:6). Finally, when Jesus left with the woman alone, he asked her about her accusers, but the woman replied that there was no one who condemned her. Jesus said "Neither do I condemn thee: go and sin no more." (John 8:11). Portia, at the beginning of the trial, tries to show Shylock the way of mercy by asking him to be merciful toward Antonio. The doctrines of the *Holy Bible* has a great lesson about loving the enemy even if he did a sin: "But I say unto you love your enemies bless them that curse you do good to them that hate you and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you;" (Matthew, 5: 44). Therefore, Shylock has two solutions suggested by Portia which are either to be

merciful or to take the three amounts of his money, but Shylock's rejection to these alternative solutions lead Portia to destroy him. Portia destroyed Shylock religiously, morally and materially. Shylock found himself forced to be a Christian, forced to beg mercy from his enemy, forced to waive on his wealth.

*The Torah* regards the theme of justice as a main theme in life. Justice is a necessary system which can keep the state away from poverty and unfairness, and the ruler is always responsible for applying justice and spreading it over his state. According to *The Torah*, Applying justice over the state can associate tightly with the survival and prosperity of the state, as it mentioned in chapter nine of Isaiah about the story of David "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever." (Isaiah, 9: 7). The theme of the necessity of applying justice by the ruler mentioned in many places in *The Torah*, for example, in chapter ten of 1 kings "therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice." (1 king, 10: 9). Also the speaking of Absalom in 2 Samuel "Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice!" (2 Samuel, 15: 4). Shylock is not related to these principles because basically his bond is injustice. His bond provides for, or ostensibly provides for killing someone for his failure to fulfill the bond, and nothing in *The Torah* can allow him to kill for that reason. The inability of paying money back in the deadline is not a plausible reason for killing. Every speech about mercy can pass without any affection in Shylock's emotion. In the trial scene Portia speaks a lot with Shylock, but all her speech is gone with the wind, because Portia's speech over mercy according to the doctrines of the New Testament means nothing to Shylock.

Therefore, Jew,  
Though justice be thy plea, consider this,  
That in the course of justice, none of us  
Should see salvation. We do pray for mercy,  
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render  
The deeds of mercy. (IV. i. 194-199)

Normally Shylock will not understand this speech above, because it is contained in the doctrines of the New Testament. One can understand Shylock's thought through his answer. Immediately Shylock answered her with a line from *The Torah*, "My deed upon my head" (IV. i. 203). The reader can find the same line in *The Torah* and exactly in 1 Kings, "The LORD will bring his bloody deeds upon his own head," (1 Kings 2: 32). It mentions also in Ezekiel, "As for me, my eye will not spare, nor will I have pity, but I will requite their deeds upon their heads." (Ezekiel 9: 10). Then Shylock shows the readers how much he is depending on justice, when he completed his speech saying

I crave the law,  
The penalty and forfeit of my bond. (IV. i. 203-204)

Shakespeare already knows these facts about the doctrines of the religions. He introduced the character of a man who is demanding justice, and nothing else than justice, and a woman who is demanding forgiveness. The common views of the Shakespeare's time are not in harmony with the Jews. *The Merchant of Venice*, as Janet Adelman describes, looks like "a document in "Christian apologetics"" (Adelman 2008: 4). Shakespeare presents panoramic scenes from his time, in which the goodness and virtue should embody with Christianity, at the same time, the greed and harshness should embody with the Jews. The distinction between the Christians and the Jews is too clear in the play. This distinction appears even in clothes, as the Jew's fashion is completely horrible. Shylock wears a black and shabby dress that makes him look like a beggar rather than a merchant. This fashion supports the idea of Jews' stinginess and their quest behind collecting money from interest and not spending it easily. Therefore, it emphasizes the idea that has been mentioned in Chapter II that Shylock's displeasure about the stealing of his money is much more painful than his daughter's escaping.

It is noted that Shakespeare wants to reflect the common view of his time over the discrimination in his play, in which he is always connecting Christian figures with eloquence of speech, wisdom and knowledge. He implanted all the features of wisdom and goodness in the characters of Portia and Antonio.



Shakespeare wants the reader to know the discrimination in his time, in which the Christian figure should always have a good reputation.

The Jews according to Shakespeare's contemporaries were supposed to be people who have bad intentions and they are innately harmful. Shakespeare exactly with these features portrays Shylock, who is the man that wants to collect money and to kill Antonio in a very inhuman way. A pound of flesh should be taken out of Antonio's body, and Antonio's blood must continue to flow until his death. Maybe a monster or a cannibal can do that rather than a human being. Shakespeare wants to show the humiliation of Shylock in order to reflect the real circumstances of the Jews in the Elizabethan age. Shylock is described as "the cruel usurer who knows no mercy, a misbeliever, a dog, a devil, as he is many times called in the play, and, possibly, a cannibal as show his desire for a pound of Antonio's flesh". (Alonso 1996: 275). Dachslager accuses Shakespeare with the lack of knowledge about real Jews, and Shylock is mere a classical picture of the Jews in the Middle Ages,

Shakespeare "gave classic expression to the myth of the Jew-villain," and, as it turned out, cruelly and ironically gave his villain enough humanity to make the myth appear real. The teacher of the play must not only be able to distinguish the reality (real Jews) from the imitation (Shylock) but, in addition, to explain where the imitation came from, beginning with the fact that Shakespeare himself knew no real Jews and that Shylock is, for the most part, a version of the imagined Jews of the Middle Ages. (Dachslager 1977: 319).

The idea of Dachslager can be abstracted into two ideas; the first idea indicates that Shylock is a classic villainous character who reflected the common view against Jews at that time. The second idea indicates that Shakespeare did not meet with the Jews during his life. There are no reliable sources stating that Shakespeare had visited Venice before, but it looks unreasonable by saying that he did not meet with the Jews before, because there were Jews coming from Spain and Portugal, at that time, in London such as Roderigo Lopez<sup>3</sup>. As a result of exiling Jews from Europe, some Jews pretend to change their religion to Christianity in order to stay in Europe and save their wealth as Shapiro mentioned; "Marrano A nickname for Spaniards, that is, one descended of Jews or infidels, and whose parents were never christened, but for to save their goods will say they are Christians." (Shapiro 1996: 13). English

writers pointed that the motives of most of the Jews who convert to Christianity are not such motives which stem from willing to be Christian, but all the matter is about trying to live in Europe despite of the hard law, which can grab their life or wealth. William Prynne stated, "most of the Jews, who since their dispersion had been baptized and turned Christians in any age or place, have done it either out of fear, to save their lives, or estates, when endangered by popular tumults, or judgements of death denounced against them for the crimes, or for fear of banishment, or by coercion of penal laws, not cordially or sincerely, they still playing the Jews in private upon every occasion, and renouncing their baptism and Christianity at least, either before or after their death." (Qtd. in Shapiro 1996: 19). Changing Judaism to Christianity was not only the issue of the sixteenth century, but also it was the issue of the late fourteenth century till the mid of the fifteenth century; "Hundreds of thousands of Spanish Jews, including much of the social and intellectual elite, had undergone conversion to Christianity in the late fourteenth through mid-fifteenth centuries, some voluntarily, some by force." (Shapiro 1996: 14). Indeed pluralizing all Jews with specific features are wrong, at the same time the Jews' bad reputations in the Elizabethan age came due to their acts such as taking interests to borrow money.

According to the social point of view at Shakespeare's era, the Jews are known as greedy people who want to gain money illegally. This point is clear from the dealing of Shylock with usury and his demanding of interest from the borrowers, while habitually the Christian hero must have the opposite behavior, because the play should reflect the discrimination between the Jews and the Christians, in which the Christian figure must reject taking interest, and he must have a high morality. Definitely Shylock is guilty of demanding Antonio's life, but as Holmer mentions that Antonio is guilty too, because of his unjustifiable hatred against Shylock; "Shylock is literally guilty of attempting to murder Antonio, but as a Christian,

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<sup>3</sup>See page 22

Antonio is spiritually guilty of murder for hating Shylock: "Whosoever hateth his brother, is a manslayer" (1 John 3:15)." (Holmer 1985: 316). Antonio orders to give half of Shylock's wealth to Jessica. Some opinions can describe the act as a very wise and merciful act, and Shakespeare used Antonio to show the value of mercy as Holmer mentions "Antonio wisely provides for the welfare of Shylock's children so that under his administration there will be at least half of Shylock's current wealth still in existence for inheritance." (Holmer 1985: 318). "Shakespeare intends Antonio's anagnorisis to teach Shylock by right Christian example the value of mercy and giving." (Holmer 1985: 319). It is a very wise act to save Jessica's life in the future. Actually, he does not worry too much about Shylock's daughter, but Jessica is Lorenzo's wife and Lorenzo is his friend, so helping his friend is probably the desire of Antonio, even if his desire is to help Shylock's daughter, he cannot use the money of Shylock. It is not his money to use it freely. The only one who can decide to give Jessica the money or not is Shylock, because it is his money.

This play comes after the famous play by Christopher Marlowe entitled *The Jew of Malta* in 1594. Shakespeare wrote *The Merchant of Venice* in 1596. History should interfere in these plays, because this group of plays coincided with a social debate about exiling Jews from English society. Officially, England was devoid of Jews in the first half of the seventeenth century, as Matar mentions when he was talking about the Anglican poets, "During the first half of the seventeenth century when Anglican poets composed some of their finest verse, there were officially no Jews in England." (Matar 1990: 79) the operation of expulsion of the Jews from England has started in 1290 till the readmission to England in 1656.

In June 1655 a newspaper reported that some Jews had been seen meeting in Hackney on a Saturday.\* Because it was their Sabbath they were said to be at prayer, 'all very clean and neat, in the corner of a garden by a house, all of them with their faces towards the East'. This account, however, was probably false because there were as yet no openly practising Jews in England. In fact, it was not until September 1655 that Oliver Cromwell revived discussions about the readmission of Jews to England. (Goldsmiths 2006: 1)

However, the plays definitely carry the form of anti-Semitic ideas as Perell quoted from Bloom "One would have to be blind, deaf and dumb not to recognize that Shakespeare's grand, equivocal comedy *The Merchant of Venice* is nevertheless a profoundly anti-Semitic work." (Perell 1998: 4-1). This form is embodied in the using of Jew characters within the plays. They look always as a pariah from society. Burckhardt mentions that "It is little use telling them that their attitude toward the Jew is anachronistic, distorted by modern, un-Elizabethan opinions about racial equality and religious tolerance." (Burckhardt 1962: 240). Burckhardt finds all these reasons are unconvincing, but in fact hating Jews was a reality of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and this hatred had continued many years till the modern life. Jews are in a state of hatred by many countries and societies, and for many reasons. There are a lot of problems emerging in the places where the Jews reside. Katz referred to the hatred of Jews in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century "Everyone in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England knew that the Jews were in league with the Devil." (Katz 1999: 440) Jews were in a place of ridicule not only because of their behavior or their religion, but also their general appearances were not acceptable by the society as Katz add:

The Jews in early modern Europe were often perceived as distinct from other people not only in their religion, but by virtue of peculiar physical characteristics. Among these were a repulsive smell, horns, a tail, and a dark skin colour (Katz 1999: 440)

Shapiro mentioned to the same point, saying;

Certainly, there are no allusions in early modern England connecting Jews to spread of syphilis, or claiming that Jews had weak feet or were prone to hysteria, characteristics increasingly attributed to European Jews by the late nineteenth century. Still other stereotypic notion, such as the belief that Jews had large hooked noses, had earlier appeared in medieval England (Shapiro 1996: 33)

Many claims appeared against Jews in Europe like the claims that the Jews had big hooked noses, or they had a horrible smell, or they had black skin. Actually, only the Portuguese Jews are black, while other Jews are normal.

By the end of the seventeenth century works like the English translation of François Maximilien Misson's *A New Voyage to Italy* make clear that it is "a vulgar error that the Jews are all black. This, Misson observes, "is only true of the Portuguese Jews, who, marrying always among one another, beget children like themselves"... But the Jews who are originally of Germany those, for example, I have seen at Prague, are not blacker than the rest of their countrymen." (Shapiro 1996: 171)

The hatred against Jews was an overall kind of hatred, which included hatred of their religion, hatred of their attitude, and hatred of their look. If they work, no one trusted them, and if they speak, no one believed them. One can remember the fate of Roderigo Lopez, who was a Jewish physician in London. Lopez was convicted of killing the Queen Elizabeth I. He was a Portuguese, but his Jewish roots prevented anyone to believe him.

At the end of the century the attitudes so engendered were further intensified by the trial and execution in 1594 of Rodrigo Lopez, a distinguished Portuguese physician of Jewish descent, who was convicted of plotting to poison Queen Elizabeth. (Healey 1977: 68)

Gaunse and Barnet were also Jews who, expelled from England for no crime just for their roots as Shapiro explained;

Gaunse and Barnet, as professing Jews, were banished the realm; while not charged with any crime, as aliens they had no legal recourse. (Shapiro 1996: 180).

*The Merchant of Venice* has many performances in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century. People like these performances because it matches their problems with the Jews. For example, on the tenth of February 1605 there was a performance at the court of King James I. This performance came after a short time from the writing date of the play, which was probably written in 1596, and published in a quarto edition in 1600. The performance contained all Shakespeare's beliefs without any changes in emotions or themes. That is to say, Shakespeare's thoughts were transported from the play to the stage. The performance gained wide admiration and it was repeated many times, as

Halio mentioned "James apparently liked the play, since he ordered it to be repeated at court two days later on Shrove Tuesday" (Halio 1993: 59). This wide interest in the play can lead one to think about the great hatred toward Jews at this period, the issue of racism against the Jews was spread significantly in Europe in the early of the seventeenth century. That is why, the performance of 1605 gained wide acceptance in Europe.

The important issue in this research is Jews in Europe, especially in Venice at the date of writing of the play. Venice is a mercantile world having a cosmopolitan structure, it has many qualities, in addition to her fame in justice, it is a very romantic and commercial place, as Halio described Venice as "a pleasure-loving city, to which swarms of tourists flocked constantly" (Halio 1993: 24-25). A cosmopolitan and unique city for trade and meeting of people from worldwide. Primarily Venice was a very famous city in the aspect of justice. Shakespeare tries to deliver a message to the readers that even in a better place of fairness, the Jews were raising problems. The law of Venice was so strict and careful in dealing with the Jews. They were forced to live in a specific old area named "Ghetto" that surrounded by high walls and there is a large gate which close every day in the sunset and guarded tightly. A red hat should be worn by Jews if they want to leave the Ghetto\_during the day in order to discriminate them. They cannot own property in Venice, and all these restrictions are in the law of Venice. Readers in one hand can see these laws as unfair rules, but on the other hand, these rules can save and protect Venice from the troubles of the Jews. Shylock was suffering from Antonio particularly and from the behavior of Christian society against him generally. Antonio as a Venetian has a sense of racism and religious intolerance, therefore Shylock found troubles with the behavior of Venetians. Halio sees that the damages in the relations between the Christians and the Jews are primarily because of the religious aspect. "Relations between Christians and Jews were far from cordial, but animosity was based upon religious ground, not racial." (Halio 1993: 27). Indeed the problem between the two sides is based on religion, but one cannot deny the existence of racism. Actually, the luxury and the powerful law in Venice lead people to a kind of vanity. People could find all pleasure and luxury in Venice, and a strong law stood behind them. With this theme, a very important conversation of Plato in his book *Republic* can interfere in our mind. Socrates refers to the seriousness of a luxurious city. He believes that luxury can bring sickness and war to the state, and the state should contain on the

necessary things only which shortened in three main things; food, dwelling, and clothing. For Socrates luxury needs to add many new things to the state. Normally the state will need to expand its size to accommodate all new stuff, and directly that will lead to war. "Will our next step be to go to war," (*Plato Republic*, Translated by John Llewelyn Davies, 1997, 373d-374c). In *The Merchant of Venice* luxury did not bring war, but it provided the society with discrimination and arrogance.

The differences over the subjects of justice and mercy in the two religions are not the only reasons of hatred, but the problem starts from the believing in prophets of both religions. The Jews do not believe in Jesus as a savior of the world, because he was poor, and the Jews always look for majesty and prestige, therefore they reject and crucify him. At the same time the Jews were described by Christians as killers of Christ. However, money also is a point of difference between the two religions. Especially dealing in usury by Jews which is forbidden in the law of Venice, but Jews should follow their doctrines. "Breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth" (Leviticus 24:20). According to the Jews, gaining money illegally is a way of their trying to live in Venice despite of the law that prevented them to own their own property.

The Jews were regarded to be evil characters, this is not the idea of Shakespeare's play *The Merchant of Venice*, nor Marlow's play *The Jew of Malta* only, but it is a view of European society in the Elizabethan age. This view embodied through many literary works by many authors such as Shakespeare, Nashe, Dickens, Marlowe, Defoe, Pope, Chaucer, Dryden, Smollett, Swift and others, as Dachslager mentions "Beginning with the medieval drama and continuing through the writings of Langland, Chaucer, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Nashe, Dryden, Smollett, Defoe, Pope, Swift, Dickens, Hawthorne, Pound, and Eliot-to mention the perhaps betterknown examples-Jews and Judaism have been depicted in English and American literature largely in negative and offensive terms." (Dachslager 1977: 315) The negative image should follow Jewish characters in the literary works even in their names like 'Shylock' or 'Shyster'. Names and images of the Jews always carry the description of crafty, greedy, usurious, conspiratorial, and aggressive.

The negative image of the Jews continued to spread all over the world until our day, despite of the sympathetic ideas to the Jews at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century until the modern time, which reflected on the performances and movies. Charles Kean is an actor who played the role of Shylock, in 1858, but in a different style.

Kean gave the character of Shylock more sobriety. He changed the idea of Shakespeare that Shylock is the obvious villain of the play through providing the character with the feature of humanity, as Halio mentioned, "Kean 'intellectualized' his acting of Shylock, bringing a freshness and energy that was new. It altered entirely William Hazlitt's view of Shylock, formed by earlier portrayals rather than Shakespeare's text. On looking into what Shakespeare wrote and comparing it to Kean's representation, he found Sylock much more human than he had suspected or other actors had displayed." (Halio 1993: 65-66). Since the first time of publishing the play till the nineteenth century Shylock was appearing as a villainous character. At the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the nineteenth century the operation of improving the image of Shylock had started. These amendments continued in the twentieth century, especially with the widespread awareness of the concepts of Semitism and anti-Semitism. In *The Merchant of Venice* the sympathetic ideas to the Jews embody clearly by making Shylock appear a more sympathetic character through omitting some lines from the play, like when Shylock says against Antonio "I hate him for he is a Christian" (I. iii. 39), or through referring to Jessica as an immature daughter who left her religion and her father, and stole her father's jewels and money. The last movie of the play was in 2004 by Michael Radford. This movie was clearly talking about the issue of Jews in Europe and portraying them as victims of the society through the introduction of the movie that talks about the suffering of the Jews in Venice. The movie started with a very clear image about discrimination and violence against the Jews. The first scene was about throwing the Jews from the bridge and Antonio's spitting upon Shylock's gabardine. Al Pacino is an American actor who played the role of Shylock in the movie, which raised the feeling of pity toward Shylock.

Teaching these anti-Semitic works of Shakespeare or Marlow or any author, in the schools can be a reason behind renewing the idea of hating Jews. These works taught in many schools over the world, therefore Dachslager asks a question about the correctness of teaching anti-Semitic works, "The first question, and perhaps the most obvious, is should such works be taught at all?" (Dachslager 1977: 315). Dachslager also mentions that hating Jews is a reaction and no one is hating Jews from his birth, "Antisemitism is, after all, a conditioned reaction; no one, we assume, is born antisemitic, nor has there been any evidence to show that antisemitism is transmitted genetically." (Dachslager 1977: 315). Indeed Anti-Semitism is a reaction,



but it is not a reaction of the individual as it is a reaction of specific societies and countries. This reaction comes due to reasons, like dealing with usury in Europe, which leads the European society to describe the Jews as greedy, or the occupation of Palestine, which leads Arab and Islamic countries to hate the Jews. So, teaching these anti-Semitic literary works is a normal reaction of countries and societies that suffered or still suffering from Jews. Dachslager criticizes authors and seeks about omitting anti-Semitic works when he says, "Without the literally hundreds of authors who have characterized Jews as child-murderers, well-poisoners, dirty peddlars, conniving usurers, criminal capitalists, heretics, and Satan incarnated, it seems possible that antisemitism might be greatly diminished-perhaps even eliminated-and some of its more dire consequences prevented." (Dachslager 1977: 316). The author should be free from any kind of restricting. Nobody should prevent him to express on his feelings and thoughts. Usually an author reflects his mind in his literary work. Some of them are against the Jews and vice versa. Let authors write whatever they want, and the reader can choose freely which book they want, whether they are against the Jews or not. The Jews demand to stop telling anti-Semitic stories, while they always remind people of the holocaust, which is a finished story since the Second World War! Telling the story of the holocaust also can raise the feeling of hatred against Germans. However, the best solution is to leave the matter to the readers whether they want to read anti-Semitic books or not, because it is a history and history must not hide. The problems of the Jews in Europe are apart from history. It is Unreasonable to mortal great literary works such as *The Merchant of Venice* in order to improve the image of Jews worldwide.

Dachslager refers to the mistake of making comparisons between Shylock and other Shakespearean characters, because Shylock is a Jew, and this is enough to create a devil. Dachslager gives an example about the character of Macbeth, "no one, either in the plays themselves, or in critical commentary on them, has ever accused Macbeth of being evil because he is a Scot or Gloucester because he is a king. Shylock, on the other hand, is evil-"the very devil incarnation"-because he is a Jew." (Dachslager 1977: 319). Dachslager never wants to accept history. His claim about the incorrectness of comparing Shylock with other Shakespearean characters is void, because one can notice clearly the theme of racism in the character of Iago in *Othello*. Racism is one of the reasons that make Iago hate Othello, and he says it obviously "I re-tell thee again and again, I hate the Moor." (Hilton and Jones 1984:

81). No one can doubt that Iago is the villain of the play, and surely he is not a Jew, but it has just raised the issue of racism, likewise the issue of the Jews in Venice in *The Merchant of Venice*. Some similarities can be noticed between Othello and Shylock, because both of them are foreigners and both of them are suffering from the indigenous people of the city. Shylock is suffering from the bad behavior of Christians and Othello from the conspiracy of Iago. Allan Bloom mentions to the same point saying;

Othello and Shylock are the figures who are the most foreign to the context in which they move and to the audience for which they were intended. In a sense, it is Shakespeare's achievement in the two plays to have made these two men who normally would have been mere objects of hatred and contempt - into human beings, who are unforgettable for their strength of soul. (Bloom 1963: 2)

Dachslager seems even not to recognize in all historical facts in the play, as he quoted from Eleanor Prosser, "It is all very well to look at the plays of the Middle Ages as drama rather than viewing the plays as historical phenomena through the distorted lens of traditional assumptions,". (Qtd. in Dachslager 1977: 320). The "traditional assumptions" mean directly denying everything that came in the play. Only history can tell us whether it is a matter of "traditional assumptions" or of historical facts. Knowing that the history has been written by both sides. Jews can write their special history by saying it is mere a "traditional assumptions" and Christians can write their special history by saying it is Jewish facts. Maybe the best solution is to leave the matter to the reader himself. The reader of *The Merchant of Venice* can decide over the issue. The knowledge and the emotion of the reader can lead him to lean on one side at the expense of the other side.

## CHAPTER II

### JUSTICE AS A MASK OF REVENGE

This chapter will refer to the position of Shylock in the court. It will deal with the appeals to justice and mercy in which all characters fight in order to reach to their own purpose. The chapter will also discuss the reasons of the great hatred between Shylock and Antonio that led Shylock to refuse to show mercy to Antonio, in addition to the real desire of Shylock behind his demanding of justice.

The court, the law of Venice and the highest authority in the land open its doors to give judgment upon a strange case. The two sides want the judgment, the first side is represented by Shylock and his bond, and the other side is represented by Portia and Antonio's friends. The problem started when Antonio was informed that his ships had sunk and that he would not be able to return the money to the Jew by the deadline anymore. The situation inside the court begins to be complicated when the law acknowledges the rightness of the bond, and the Jew's rejection of any financial compensation. This turning point makes the Christians appeal to the concept of mercy to save Antonio.

PORTIA

Of a strange nature is the suit you follow,  
Yet in such rule that the Venetian law  
Cannot impugn you as you do proceed.  
(To Antonio) You stand within his danger, do you not?

ANTONIO

Ay, so he says.

PORTIA Do you confess the bond?

ANTONIO

I do

PORTIA Then must the Jew be merciful. (IV. i. 174-179)

The saying of Portia "must the Jew be merciful" is the easiest way to solve Antonio's problem. According to Portia's first sight, there is no lawful way to save Antonio from death, that is why the value of mercy is necessary to achieve personal benefits, as Moody mentions;

The Christians introduce a further complication, to their own advantages, by appealing to a higher principle than law, and translating the issue from the relatively simple legal one into a contest of Justice and Mercy. (Moody 1991: 80)

This concept makes the readers distinguish between the two sides and regard the Christian group, which includes Portia and Antonio with his friends as representing virtue, and the Jew as evil, because the readers generally sympathize more with the side who demands mercy. Usually, this side gets more sympathy than the other side. The inhuman bond of Shylock is also responsible for giving the Christian group the quality of virtue and the Jew the form of the devil. Nobody can sympathize a person who wants to kill a citizen, that is why most critical opinions favor Portia's side.

The word 'devil' can be identified with the character of Shylock in more than one passage. The word devil is coming from the Greek word 'diábolos', which means 'accuser'. As it is known that the devil is the enemy of God. God always wants to help and save man while the devil urges people to commit sins, and he exploits the weakest moment of a man to achieve his desire, like Shylock, who exploited the weakness of Antonio. When the news of Antonio's apparently lost ships reached to the ears of Shylock, he resolved that Antonio will not be able to pay back his money, and he insisted on taking his satanic penalty.

Let forfeit  
Be nominated for an equal pound  
Of your fair flesh to be cut off and taken  
In what part of your body pleaseth me. (I. iii. 145\_148)

No one can read *The Merchant of Venice* without being astonished by these lines above and the strange legal document of Shylock. Shylock's desire of revenge is embodied clearly in his bond. One can ask: is this just? Or even is it a logical penalty clause? Because justice is a feature of human beings and some critics like H. G. Barker go more in their interpretation by describing the bond as superstition which is unrelated to humanity.

*The Merchant of Venice* is a fairy tale. Shakespeare did not leave the fables, the bound become quite incredible when acted by human beings. (Graville-Barker 1991: 3)

Graville-Barker finds the play associated with superstitions more than reality. Through Shylock's bond one can remember many fairy tales about cannibalism, like *Jack and the Beanstalk* when the giant seeks for Jack to eat him when Jack was hiding under the table. The giant says;

Fe, fa, fi-fo-fum,  
I smell the breath of an Englishman.  
Let him be alive or let him be dead,  
I'll grind his bones to make my bread. (Lang 1895: 142)

Or the old woman in the story of *Hansel and Gretel*, who jailed the two children in a room, Hansel and her sister Gretel, and fattened them in order to use them as a meal! She was boiling the water in order to make a soup from the children's organs. Shylock is not so far from the giant or the old woman, who of course will not eat Antonio's flesh. He just wants to feed his revenge, as he replied Salarino when he asked him about the advantage of taking Antonio's flesh, To bait fish withal. If it will feed nothing else, it will feed my revenge. (III. i. 50-51) Shylock's desire of cutting flesh with a knife from a human can be put him in the position of comparing with the characters of the fairy tales. The spirit of killing human carelessly is present in the character of Shylock as well as in the characters of the fairy tales.

Definitely, Shylock's legal document is irrational, but Shylock has his own reasons, knowing that religion and history are related to this bond. Shylock's unbridled desire for revenge makes him quite convinced in his covenant which brings troubles to him. Via the bond Shylock loses his case. Portia wins the case, not by breaching the bond, but by taking it even more literally.

Thyself shalt see the act;  
For as thou urgest justice, be assured  
Thou shalt have justice, more than thou desir'st. (IV. i. 311-313)

Shylock's hungry spirit for revenge leads him to require a very inhuman bond. He bears all the insults and the spits from Antonio only to have a sooner chance to revenge, and the bond is a means to revenge. Cunningly Portia deals with the bond. As Sigurd Burckhardt mentions,

The bond turns out to be the source of deliverance. Portia, won through the bond, wins Antonio's release from it; what is more, she wins it, not by breaking the bond, but by submitting to its rigor more rigorously than even the Jew had thought to do. (Burckhardt 1962: 242).

Portia with her slyness changes the bond to her advantage without breaking it. Therefore Shylock's failure is because of his urgent desire for revenge, which is more than his Jewish identity.

Shylock's insistence on justice and rejection of money is a proof of his retaliatory desire. Shylock rejects six thousand ducats for the sake of revenge. This bond also brings losses to Shylock. Choosing mercy and taking the six thousand ducats could save him from great loss. He trusts in justice more than necessary, and believes that justice can save him and nobody can nullify the effect of his bond. This can be seen from the repetition of the words "I'll have my bond" many times.

I'll have my bond. Speak not against my bond  
I have sworn an oath that I will have my bond (III, iii, 4-5),

I'll have my bond; I will not hear thee speak.  
I'll have my bond; and therefore speak no more (III, iii, 12-13)

I'll have no speaking; I will have my bond. (III, iii, 17)

Actually, there is no advantage in cutting Antonio's flesh, and of course for the Jew the six thousand ducats are more useful than the flesh, but the need for revenge makes him see nothing as more important than taking Antonio's life. Shylock seeks constantly beyond justice (revenge), because he knows that his right is unobtainable through entreaties. He should use rigor upon Antonio's case and thus he demands his

The hatred of Shylock and Antonio are strongly related to race and religion. One can find this kind of antagonism between characters in many plays of Shakespeare. For example, in *Othello*, one can see obviously the great hatred of Iago against Othello. This hatred stems from the truth that Othello is a Moor who has a dark skin, somehow like the clam made upon the Jews in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup>See CHAPTER I, p. 21-22

Racism is obvious from Iago's speech against Othello; "I re-tell thee again and again, I hate the Moor." (Hilton and Jones 1984: 81). He even does not want to pronounce his name. He says 'the Moor' in order to emphasize the fact that Othello does not belong to his society. The hatred of Iago against Othello is not only because he is a Moor, but also because Othello is a successful Moor. He is a Moorish general who marries with a very charming lady. Iago has a deep feeling that the moor does not deserve all these successes. The noticeable difference between the two plays, about the idea of revenge, is the legal bond of Shylock. In *The Merchant of Venice*, Shylock's desire of revenge is open and legal. He does not hide his hatred against Antonio, unlike the desire of Iago, who acts the role of the honest man to Othello, and plans many plots behind him. That is why, Iago forces many times to use soliloquy in order to reveal on his antagonism against Othello. In a matter of fact, not only Shakespeare but, as critic John Middleton Murry says, "antagonism is a condition of the Elizabethan theater and the character should take a clear side on whether he/she is hero or villain." (Murry 1991: 43) This great hatred against Antonio leads one to say that Shylock seeks mainly to revenge and not to apply the principles of justice. His need for revenge makes him blind and sees nothing other than achieving his desire in any means possible, even if it is an inhuman way. Shylock confuses justice with revenge. He regards every way that leads him to accomplish his desire as a fair and just way.

Shylock speaks often of the principles of justice that Judaism recommends, in order to reach the basic goal of getting Antonio's life and achieving revenge. Shylock wants his revenge for many reasons; the bad attitude of Antonio towards Shylock, the issue of his daughter, and the financial problems that is the main reason for Shylock's demand of revenge.

Signor Antonio, many a time and oft  
In the Rialto you have rated me  
About my moneys and my usances.  
Still have I borne it with a patient shrug,  
For suff'rance is the badge of all our tribe.  
You call me misbeliever, cut-throat, dog  
And spit upon my Jewish gabardine  
And all for use of that which is mine own. (I. iii. 103-110)

Shylock's hatred against Antonio started before the story of Shylock's daughter. When Bassanio asks Shylock to lend him money, Shylock tells him that "Antonio is a good man." (I. iii. 12). In this line, the use of the pun is obvious by Shakespeare. This description of Antonio as a good man is definitely carrying the opposite meaning. Antonio, as it is clear from the quotation above, often attempted to insult Shylock with bad words or even spits on his Jewish gabardine. So, Shylock stores all Antonio's behaviors and words in his mind, which is why the hatred of Shylock towards Antonio increases day after day. However, this hatred reaches its maximum after Jessica's escaping with Lorenzo, when she steals a casket of money and jewels from her father in addition to changing her religion to Christianity.

My daughter! O my ducats! O my daughter!  
Fled with Christian! O my Christian ducats!  
Justice! The law! My ducats, and my daughter!  
A sealed bag, two sealed bags of ducats,  
Of double ducats, stolen from me by my daughter!  
And jewels, two stones, two rich and precious Stones, Stolen by my daughter!  
Justice! Find the girl;  
She hath the stones upon her, and the ducats. (II. Viii. 15-22)

Another analysis for this extreme hatred is the religious aspect. Shylock all through the play uses the word Christianity with an angry mood, and he says openly, "I hate him for he is a Christian" (I. iii. 39). That is why the hatred of Shylock towards Antonio stems from two central points, first the racial and religious reasons. Second the personal reasons which include Antonio's attitudes against Shylock and the competitions between them in the mercantile world. Antonio lends money without any interest. According to Shakespeare's time this is the main reason of antagonism, because Jews' love for money is higher than anything.

He lends out money gratis and brings down  
The rate of usance here with us in Venice.  
If I can catch him once upon the hip,  
I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him.  
He hates our sacred nation, and he rails,  
Even there where merchants most do congregate,  
On me, my bargains, and my well-won thrift,  
Which he calls interest. Cursed be my tribe  
If I forgive him. (I. iii. 41-49)



According to the idea of Shakespeare's time, nothing bothers Jews more than stealing or losing their money, and Antonio enrages Shylock mainly as a business rival. The greatest obsession for Shylock is collecting money, thus his displeasure about stealing his money is much more painful than his daughter's escaping. "It is not the loss of his daughter that moves Shylock, but only the loss of his money." (Murry 1991: 45). Shylock compares money with his life. When the court allows him to go home at the expense of confiscating his money, Shylock is shocked at receiving the hard judgment upon his wealth. He regards this judgment as taking the whole reason of what he lives for.

you take my life  
When you do take the means whereby I live. (IV. i. 372-373)

There is no place for mercy in Shylock's heart after all these reasons. The hatred between Shylock and Antonio is a mutual grudge. Shylock is also accused of usury, which is not accepted in the Christian tradition. Shylock seeks revenge and nothing else, and this is quite clear from his speech before entering the court. He can accept any kind of speech except the speech over mercy.

Gaoler, look to him. Tell not me of mercy.  
This is the fool that lent out money gratis.  
Gaoler, look to him. (III, iii, 1-3)

There is no room for discussion with Shylock over mercy. He even never looked to Antonio in order to show that the subject of mercy is meaningless for him. He walks fast and speaks with Antonio indirectly when he talked with the jailer.

At first sight, Shylock looks like an obvious villain, despite the fact that the ordinary reader of the play sometimes can sympathize with him for his calamities. Murry writes: "Shylock undoubtedly is, to a certain degree, made sympathetic to us" (Murry 1991: 44). Shylock plays a negative role in the play. Sometimes he accepts humiliation from Antonio, sometimes he seems avaricious and sometimes one can note that Shakespeare puts Shylock in the position of ridicule, for example, when Graziano mocks at Shylock in the trial scene and leads all attendees in the court to mock at him. Cunningly Portia deludes Shylock that the law is on his side and he will win the case.

There is no power in Venice  
Can alter a decree established.  
'Twill be recorded for a precedent (IV. i. 215-217)

This speech deceived Shylock. He believed that a very just young man had come to the court in order to help him to take his right. Therefore Shylock did not hesitate to praise Portia and compared her with the prophet Daniel; "A Daniel come to judgment, yea, a Daniel!" (IV. i.220). But later he realized that the case began to turn against him and he will lose and be chastised. At that moment Graziano starts to mock Shylock by repeating Shylock's word about the just man; "A second Daniel, a Daniel, Jew!" (IV. i. 329). Shylock realizes that he is put in a ridiculous situation when all attendees laugh at him.

At the beginning of the trial scene, Shylock seems to be confident and speaks well with convincing statements to the Duke. He speaks freely and powerfully with the uses of similes. He thinks that nobody can stop him from achieving his revenge. He makes everybody in the court feel helpless to save Antonio. Even the Duke himself cannot do anything for Antonio. When Shylock feels that sympathy controls the Duke, he threatens him by reminding him of the charter, and the rules of Venice. "If you deny it, let the danger light upon your charter and your city's freedom." (IV. i. 37-38). Shylock's desire for revenge gives the reader a contradictory feeling. On one hand the feeling of sympathy for his calamities, and on the other hand his inhuman bond and his idea of revenge which are morally unacceptable.

That is why, when a director wants to put on a production or make a movie of *The Merchant of Venice*; he will have some difficulties in how to show Shylock's character. Some of the directors sympathize with him, and embody him as a victim of a Christian conspiracy, while other directors can easily embody him as a villain of the play. It is a matter of wishes as Alexander J. Snyder mentions: "Shylock can easily be depicted as vindictive or sympathetic as an actor or director wishes." (Snyder 2009: 2). The differences of the audience's emotions towards Shylock cannot ever change the fact that his bond and his spirit of revenge under the cover of justice reflect an inhuman desire.

As a conclusion, Shylock depends on the support of justice, which Judaism teaches, in order to achieve his desire of revenge. His strange bond, his rejection of three times the amount of money offered by Bassanio, his insistence on justice, and his great hatred against Antonio, prove the ancient grudge against the Christians. The reader might find Shylock to be a person who deserves sympathy and pity regardless of whether his bond is associated with humanity or not. The source of feeling sorry for Shylock basically stems from a sorrow his calamities.

## CHAPTER III

### THE VOICE OF MERCY IN THE COURT

This chapter will discuss the character of Portia in terms of mercy. It will explain Portia's acts in the trial scene. Many writers praise her behaviors, while others criticize her. Portia's demanding for mercy than her harsh behavior against Shylock makes one wonder about her desire, As Benston mentions; "Portia's beautiful speech on the "quality of mercy" easily led one to see her as the personification of the virtue. Hence the confusion when she shows no mercy toward Shylock." (Benston 1991: 375). Therefore, the duty of this chapter is to remove confusion over Portia's turning point in the court, which is indeed the climax of the play.

The moral development of Portia can make one notice the increasing of confidence in her personality. She is relieved after the tale of the three caskets. She has seemed scared and powerless toward her father's commandment. She cannot refuse or accept any suitor. Harley Granville-Barker describes her as a "slave of the caskets" (Granville-Barker 1991: 15) All the matter depends on luck and the choosing of suitors, as she expresses, "I may neither choose who I would, nor refuse who I dislike" (I. ii. 22-23)

Later on, after the right choice of Bassanio, Portia seems very powerful and breaks all restrictions to become a liberal woman. She has a great feeling of freedom, especially when dressed as Doctor Bellario, who represents the law. At the court

Portia makes an eloquent appeal for mercy. The hearer has the impression that her bitter experience of life has made her tongue speak in a perfect and balanced style, supporting her to reincarnated role of the Doctor. As Alice N. Benston puts forward:

Portia does not need a wig and robe to turn into a doctor of laws. Apparently she has listened before to her kinsman Bellario. But, more importantly, it is personal experience that has taught her. (Benston 1991: 370)

Benston points out that Portia has experience of the power of the law and the fulfillment of a will. The test of caskets taught her respect for the law and authority.

Portia's previous behavior indicates that, much as she values that half of her soul, she would not give up or subvert law, authority, or power. Just as she had misgivings as to the outcome of her father's will but decided to fulfill her obligation, so, too, she feels that Bassanio must fulfill his contracts (both the financial debt and the bond of love), no matter what the outcome. (Benston 1991: 373-374)

Portia remains faithful to her father's will, despite her grumbling about the idea of the three caskets, which depend mainly on luck. She learns a lesson about being faithful, that is why she tried to find a legal way to save Antonio.

At the beginning of the trial, Portia represents mercy, by asking forgiveness from Shylock, but when she realizes that Shylock cannot give up and leave his bond, she adopts justice in order to learn Shylock a lesson about the benefits of mercy and to deliver a message that justice is something hard to reach. When Portia wins the case, she did not show any kind of mercy to Shylock, on the contrary; she applies justice in order to increase Shylock's calamities. She prevents him from taking the money and forcing him to ask forgiveness from the Duke. Shylock seemed like a slave who begs for mercy from his owner. Portia offers two solutions for Shylock, either to be merciful or to take the six thousand ducats.

A pound of flesh, to be by him cut off  
Nearest the merchant's heart. (To Shylock) Be merciful.  
Take thrice the money. Bid me tear the bond. ( IV. i. 229-231).

If there were someone to be responsible for Shylock's loss, it would be Shylock himself. His insistence on justice and his rejection of three amounts the money leads

Portia to destroy him by justice. Obviously, the trial scene embodies the idea of Shakespeare about raising the value of mercy upon justice. And about the existence of Christianity as a religion that encourages mercy and alleviates the stiffness of Judaism.

It is true that, Portia offers mercy to Shylock. She also offers three times the amount of money, but, when Shylock rejects Portia's request, she changes her behavior completely. She insists on justice through four steps in order to destroy him. The first step, when she nullifies the bond by her clamming that the bond includes only flesh without blood, and if a drop of blood fell, the punishment will be the confiscation of the Jews' lands and goods;

This bond doth give thee here no jot of blood;  
The words expressly are 'a pound of flesh'.  
Take then thy bond. Take thou thy pound of flesh.  
But in the cutting it, if thou dost shed  
One drop of Christian blood, thy lands and goods  
Are by the laws of Venice confiscate  
Unto the state of Venice. (IV. i. 303-309)

This condition makes Shylock quite surprised. He answers her in only four words, "Is that the law?" (IV. i. 311). He cannot refuse or disagree, because this is the law that he insists on. This claim of Portia ends the conflict between the stiffness of laws and the flexibility of mercy. In which, Portia successfully nullifies Shylock's bond. Bilello points out, "Critics generally agree that the play's court scene examines the conflict between the rigor of common law literalism and the flexibility of equitable construction." (Bilello 2004: 12). The best solution for the Jew is to accept the money and to leave his bond, "I take this offer, then. Pay the bond thrice and let the Christian go." (IV. i. 315-316). But Portia wants to make Shylock lose everything by justice, therefore, she tells him that he will have justice more than his desire, "Thyself shalt see the act; for as thou urgest justice, be assure thou shalt have justice, more than desir'st." (VI. i. 311-313). She could just leave him to go home after his abdication of the bond, but Portia does not leave Shylock alone. The second step when she prevents him taking the money. Portia mocks at Shylock when she insists upon him taking his pound of flesh from Antonio's body, but without any drop of blood.

Therefore prepare thee to cut off the flesh.  
Shed thou no blood, nor cut thou less nor more  
But just a pound of flesh. (IV. i. 320-322)

The third step when she forces him to beg mercy from his enemy (Antonio), who forces him to change his religion to Christianity. A key moment in the drama is attained when she asks: "What mercy can you render him, Antonio?" (IV. i. 374). Even Shylock's wealth was extracted by Portia's slyness. Shylock says it obviously, "Give me my principal, and let me go" (VI. i. 332). Shylock just wants to go home. He no longer wants his right or even money. Portia does not want to undo her intention about teaching Shylock the lesson, so, there is a fourth step when she finishes him via knockout, when she tells him that he, directly or indirectly, wants the life of a citizen. According to the law of Venice, if a foreigner risks a citizen's life, a citizen can claim half of the foreigner's wealth, and the second half must go to the state.

It is enacted in the law of Venice,  
If it be proved against an alien  
That by direct or indirect attempts  
He seek the life of any citizen,  
The party 'gainst the which he doth contrive  
Shall seize one half his goods; the other half  
Comes to the privy coffer of the state, (VI. i. 344-350).

Despite of Shylock's stubbornness, the Duke shows much magnanimous behavior when he pardons Shylock and gives him back his life without expecting him to beg, and the half of Shylock's wealth, which should be given to the state, he allows him to keep it after the payment of the fine.

I pardon thee thy life before thou ask it.  
For half thy wealth, it is Antonio's.  
The other half comes to the general state,  
Which humbleness may drive unto a fine. (VI. i. 365-368).

This is the maximum magnanimity that the Duke can show. He cannot pardon him for the half of Antonio, because this is Antonio's right, and Portia reminds the Duke by saying that the choice of the Duke is wise but Antonio will be free in his choice.

"Ay, for the state, not for Antonio." (VI. i. 369). Antonio follows Portia's attitude about teaching Shylock the lesson, therefore he asks Shylock to be a Christian and gives his wealth to Jessica after his death.

Portia tries to make Shylock understand that mercy is necessary and he must give it to Antonio. "Then must the Jew be merciful" (VI. i. 179). Benston sees that Portia's using of the word "must" is not for obligating Shylock to show mercy, but for leading him to another solution rather than killing. Shylock, however, understands the word wrongly; "Shylock misconstrues and takes Portia's use of the word "must" to mean compulsion rather than, as she intends, a posing of alternatives." (Benston 1991: 376). In fact Portia means what she says, and the word "must" is already achieved at the end of the play, when she forces Shylock to waive his bond. Portia already has a plan to save Antonio, the first choice was asking Shylock to show mercy, and the second choice was forcing him to waive on his bond, as Oldrieve mentions;

Portia has her plan clearly worked out before she enters the courtroom. She hopes, like the Duke, that she can talk Shylock into relenting and conforming to the expectations of the establishment, but she is prepared to "throw the book at him" if he should not. (Oldrieve 1993: 94).

Portia exploits Shylock's rigor in applying the law strictly. He never looks to any side of humanity or mercy. He answers Portia according to the law and his bond only. Before the moment of cutting the flesh from Antonio's body, Portia asked Shylock if there is any surgeon to stop the bleeding of Antonio's blood. Shylock answered her easily that there is no point in the bond about surgeon.

Portia  
Have by some surgeon, Shylock, on your charge  
To stop his wounds, lest he do bleed to death.  
Shylock  
Is it so nominated in the bond? (IV. i. 254-256).

This answer made Portia follow the same style of Shylock. She revised the bond carefully and as a result she found that there was no point in the bond about blood, therefore Shylock must take only flesh without any drop of blood. However, in this action Portia had killed two birds with one stone. On one hand she does not break up the law of Venice, and on the other hand she prevents Shylock securing his bond.



Shakespeare gives the character of Portia all the power, wisdom, and resourcefulness in order to let her be the strongest character in the play. In fact, this strong role of Portia is not suitable at that time. She went to the court, punished Shylock, saved Antonio, and took the place of the law, despite of the difficult situation of women in the Elizabethan age. Women were portrayed to be weaker than men. Generally, the poetry and drama of Shakespeare reveal a wide knowledge of man in various social, political, or moral situations. In *The Merchant of Venice* Shakespeare showed the male dominated world of the Elizabethan era through embodying Portia as a victim of the male world, in which she could not do anything to change her dangerous lottery of the three caskets that imposed over her life by her father. Oldrieve mentions;

Portia is her father's property: even from the grave he has the legal and moral right to decide the most intimate concerns of her life. Furthermore, when married, she is expected to transfer control of her life and living from her father's hands to the hands of a man who might well be completely unknown to her. (Oldrieve 1993: 88).

actually, even Portia's success in the court was happening when she gave up her female character in order to disguise as a male lawyer character. Shakespeare used to strengthen the role of women by his heroine like Portia, lady Macbeth, Viola ... etc. It seems like a kind of criticism upon the male world domination. The punishment of Portia does not only hit Shylock, but as Oldrieve mentions, that Antonio is damaged too, "Antonio doesn't lose Bassanio or his power to Shylock in public, but in private, he loses both to Portia." (Oldrieve 1993: 101).

At the end of the trial, Antonio took his advantage and Shylock lost everything. Observers found that Shylock's end looks very cruel. Indeed, he is the great loser of the play. He loses almost everything except his life. Shylock's insistence on justice and ignoring Portia's speech over mercy or convincing with the money, leads him to reach to his sorrowful end. Portia punishes Shylock well enough to teach him that depending on justice and ignoring mercy can lead to lose, as it is Shakespeare's idea about raising the value of mercy.

## CHAPTER IV

### JUSTICE AND MERCY IN IMAGERY

Throughout the world, the set of scales is a symbol of justice, and therefore a picture of scales always hangs on the walls of law courts. For Christians, Jesus is a symbol of mercy. The New Testament refers to the mercy of Jesus through many stories as has been mentioned in chapter I above about the woman who was taken in adultery. God is always the source of mercy for Muslims. In Islam, God has 99 names and the second name is 'El Rahman' that means who has great mercy. In the Qur'an the name of El Rahman is also mentioned in the first Surat "The Entirely Merciful, the Especially Compassionate," (Al-Fatihah 1:3)

However, in *The Merchant of Venice* Shakespeare used many symbols to refer to the issues of justice and mercy. In the court Shylock was very excited to cut Antonio's flesh. He sharpened his sword without paying attention to the existence of the Duke. This behavior made Bassanio very nervous. He shouted to Shylock to stop sharpening his knife. "Why dost thou whet thy knife so earnestly?" (IV. i. 120). This knife is a symbol of justice. According to Shylock the knife is a tool that gives him his right and achieves justice.

Shylock brought another symbol of justice to the court, which is the scales. It was in Shylock's mind to weigh a pound of flesh. Completely, Shylock brought everything belonging to justice but of course he forgot to bring a surgeon with him in order to stop Antonio's bleeding, because this behavior is associated with the concept of mercy. The country that the play takes place is a symbol of justice too, as it was mentioned in Chapter I above about the importance of Italy and especially of Venice.

Some symbols in the play are very controversial issues, like the three caskets. One can wonder if it is a just way and it can refer to the justice or it is mere imposition of the father's opinion. According to Portia, the lottery is a symbol of her father's control over her future life. This is clear from her speech with Nerissa,

O me, the word 'choose!' I may neither choose who I would nor refuse who I dislike; so is the will of a living daughter curbed by the will of a dead father. Is it not hard, Nerissa, that I cannot choose one nor refuse none? (I. ii. 22-26)

What is the wisdom of putting Portia's picture in one of the three caskets and leave her future life shorten in a lottery? This action lacked in justice. What will happen if one of the unsuitable suitors found her picture? Surely, her life will face many obstacles, because she should accept and marry him with all his flaws. All the lottery operation was lacking in wisdom and justice, not only for Portia but also for the suitors, because the suitors will not able to marry any woman if they failed to find Portia's picture. At the same time, Portia and her wealth will be at the disposal of the man who chooses the right casket, that is why Bassanio risked with Antonio's money in order to solve his own financial problems.

Another controversial point is when Shylock talks about the slaves. It is mere a hypothesis to stop the demands of the Duke to show mercy. According to Shylock there is no wrong in his bond and mercy should not rise upon justice.

You have among you many a purchased slave  
Which, like you asses and your dogs and mules,  
You use in abject and in slavish parts,  
Because you bought them. Shall I say to you  
'Let them be free, marry them to your heirs.  
Why sweat they under burdens? Let their beds  
Be made as soft as yours, and let their palates  
Be seasoned with such viands'? you will answer  
'The slaves are ours'. So do I answer you.  
The pound of flesh which I demand of him  
Is dearly bought: 'tis mine, and I will have it.  
If you deny me, fie upon your law!  
There is no force in the decrees of Venice.  
I stand for judgement. Answer: shall I have it? (IV. i. 87 102)

Shylock does not only answer the Duke, but also gives him a hypothesis in order to support his position. The Duke cannot refute Shylock's speech, because he knows that the law is standing for the Jew. Normally the slaves face a special treatment, special social class which is lower than the owner. Whatever the degree of owner's generosity, he is not raising them to be equal with him. Definitely, one can see the slaves with the eyes of mercy, but is it fair to equalize them with the owner? That is what Shylock means. If one owns something, he will be free to deal with it. The owner deals freely with his slaves, whether he wants to prepare a soft or harsh bed for them, because the slaves are his own as well as the pound of flesh is owned by Shylock, so he is free whether he wants to show mercy or not.

A pound of flesh is a clear imagery of justice. Shylock believes that this pound of flesh is his right, far from the concept of mercy, he should cut this pound. This pound of flesh also reminds the reader of a historical fact that Janet Adelman mentioned in *Blood Relations: Christian and Jew in The Merchant of Venice* "As the potential circumciser of Antonio, Shylock would be merely following in the footsteps of his allegedly bloody-minded ancestors, who were routinely accused of circumcising Christians" (Adelman 2008: 106). Katz also mentioned in the same topic saying; "It was also claimed that Jews longed to poison Christians, desecrate the Host, murder Christian children, and use their blood for ritual purposes" (Katz 1999: 440) It is said that in the Elizabethan age, the Jews had many ways to murder. One of these stories concludes that the Jews used to abduct the Christian children on Easter and kill them in a Jewish Passover holiday. Regardless whether this was a fake story or not, but it was spread in the 16th century.

The court also is a symbol of Justice. It is the place that everyone can take his right by law, but in *The Merchant of Venice* one should ask whether the court had given the right judgment to the two sides or not? With regard to Antonio, everything changed in the positive way in the court, and he survived from death by Portia's smartness, but many observers found that the court was very cruel and merciless toward Shylock.

Usury is another issue that one can wonder whether it is a just or unjust act. The law of Venice forbids dealing with usury but Shylock does not care about the law. He always wants to put usury in a legal form, and that is clear from his speech with Antonio.

SHYLOCK: When Jacob grazed his uncle Laban's sheep  
 This Jacob from our holy Abram was,  
 As his wise mother wrought in his behalf,  
 The third possessor; ay, he was the third –  
 ANTONIO: And what of him? did he take interest?  
 SHYLOCK: No, not take interest, not, as you would say,  
 Directly interest: mark what Jacob did:  
 When Laban and himself were compromised  
 That all the eanlings which were streak'd and pied  
 Should fall as Jacob's hire, the ewes, being rank  
 In the end of autumn turned to the rams,  
 And, when the work of generation was  
 Between these woolly breeders in the act,  
 The skilful shepherd peel'd me certain wands,  
 And, in the doing of the deed of kind,  
 He stuck them up before the fulsome ewes,  
 Who then conceiving did in eaning time  
 Fall parti-colour'd lambs, and those were Jacob's.  
 This was a way to thrive, and he was blest;  
 And thrift is blessing, if men steal it not. (I. iii. 68-87)

As a matter of fact, Shylock tells a story of Jacob and his uncle Laban from the Old Testament in Genesis (25-35). Where Jacob wants to marry Rachel, the daughter of his uncle, and his uncle asks him to take care of his sheep as a condition to marry his daughter. Jacob places striped branches in front of the sheep when they mated, the sheep, then give birth to striped lambs. Jacob is considered pretty crafty to get super rich by doing this. Shylock believes that this story refers to the human ingenuity while Antonio accused Shylock to use a biblical story in order to cover the usury with a legal cover. According to Antonio the success of Jacob is an image of God's providence.

The present of the Duke is a symbol of justice too. Usually, the word 'Duke' could give an impression to the reader about an old man who represents justice, dignity, and order. The last decision over any case in the court must be given by the Duke. In *The Merchant of Venice*, the Duke seems very calm and wise, in spite of his last decision when he applies Antonio's request about changing the religion of the Jew. Shylock is forced to change his religion to Christianity. The Duke is applied the request and ordered Shylock to change his religion to Christianity otherwise he will change his decision about pardoning him.

He shall do this, or else I do recant  
 The pardon that I late pronounced here. (IV. i. 387-388)

On one hand, one can see that this is the wrong decision of the Duke, but on the other hand, it is Antonio's right to forgive Shylock. There is not a lot of blame to those who change their religion intentionally, as Jessica's act when she escaped with Lorenzo and converted to Christianity, but forcing someone to change his religion does not belong to human free will, and the freedom of religion. Because religion is like a means to connect man with God according to his specific beliefs, therefore no one must change his/her beliefs by force.

Generally, the rain is associated with the good omens, love, hope, and goodness. It also can be a symbol of mercy as it is mentioned by Portia; "The quality of mercy is not strained. It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven" (IV. i. 181-182). Portia tries to convince Shylock to waive on his bond and to show mercy. She talks a lot about the value of mercy and she asks Shylock to take three amount of his money. But none of these choices these choices is suitable for Shylock because he wants only one thing that controls his mind and makes it quite dark in front of any merciful suggestion.

There is another important point that can provide the reader with more imagery about the characters, which is the moral development of each character. Each character can give the reader more than one adjective during the play. For example, at the beginning of the play one can notice the symbol of humiliation in the character of Shylock. Patiently he lodes Antonio's insults and spits. After that, the reader can sympathize with Shylock. He loses his money, his daughter, and his dear ring. Later on the reader can resemble him to a monster through his desire of taking Antonio's flesh. Therefore, one can resemble Shylock with three different stages according to his moral development.

## CONCLUSION

This thesis deals with the concepts of justice and mercy, in which the two concepts concerning the law and the ethics are connected with: the Greek mythology and philosophy, the characters of *The Merchant of Venice*, society, and religions. *The Merchant of Venice* is connected deeply with the themes of justice and mercy, in which the two themes are most obviously in the trial scene, in the speeches of Shylock and Portia, in the sacrifice of Antonio, in the obstinacy of Shylock, and even in the devices that are used in the play, such as the scales, the bond, and the knife.

Revenge and getting more than what one deserves are one way road that leads one to terrible results. A person must seek for justice because it is the only way that enables everyone to get their rights fairly enough. In that way the offender will be punished and the victim will receive his right. For example, in *The Merchant of Venice* there are two characters, Shylock, the Jew and Antonio, the merchant. Who the victim is and who the offender is quickly shifts from one pole to another in the trial scene. At the beginning of the trial scene, Antonio appears to be the victim and Shylock, the offender who will take a pound of flesh from Antonio's body, but with Portia's interference in which she says: "This bond doth give thee here no jot of blood; The words expressly are 'a pound of flesh'. Take then thy bond." (VI. i. 303-305) the scales shift. At the end of the trial scene, Shylock becomes the victim as well as "the other" who must convert to Christianity and Antonio's life is saved but Antonio, this time, becomes the offender. Shylock is the victim who wants to get back his money that he has lent to Antonio, but he goes further in his demands by claiming for one pound of Antonio's flesh rather than his money, therefore, he loses everything at the end of the play, while Antonio is the one who must give Shylock his right. In the trial Shylock is offered three amounts of his money only to waive on his bond, but he refuses the offer asking for something more than his money, because

he is constantly looking for his revenge not for his right. That is why he ends up as the only loser of the play. It is obvious that he is looking only for taking his revenge from Antonio due to previous conflicts. One can notice Shylock's spirit of revenge through his inhuman bond, and through his insistence on justice in which he refuses to take any financial compensation. However, Shylock does not hide his feeling, on the contrary, he expresses his feelings clearly when he says; "To bait fish withal. If it will feed nothing else, it will feed my revenge" (III. i. 50-51). Shylock's idea of revenge makes him quite blind and sees no other solutions rather than killing his enemy. Therefore, at the end Shylock loses his money, his religion, and even his right of recovering his money. One can see Portia as the wise lady who seeks to spread the teachings of mercy. She asks Shylock to be merciful, many times she tries to make Shylock waive on his bond, but the insistence of Shylock on his desire to revenge makes Portia show no mercy to him. She pulls out his wealth, forces him to change his religion, and forces him to beg mercy from Antonio.

In order not to blame Shylock and Portia too much, let the reader be placed in the position of Shylock and Portia. One can imagine himself as Shylock, the Jew in the court, the man who endures a lot of abuses from his enemy, and who suffers the loss of his wealth more than the loss of his daughter to a Christian young man. Or one can imagine himself as Portia, the young and beautiful lady from Belmont who tries to stop a legal crime, and a woman who tries to help her fiancé. Away from *The Merchant of Venice*, the question which the reader should ask himself is about the possibility of showing mercy to the absolute enemy. Can one show mercy to his enemy if he was oppressed and the oppressor appeared as a victim in front of him? All the matter is about satisfying human desires in their souls, whereas one can rarely be convinced with a little thing. People are always seeking for their advantages to satisfy their human souls, that is why seeking for self advantage can hinder the high values of justice and mercy and cause someone to lose his own humanity and become mean. The matter of self advantage is an important thing for human life. One can remember the speech of Thrasymachus, which is mentioned in the Introduction above, about defending justice when he says "justice is simply the interest of the stronger" (Plato 1997: 338b-339a). In reality, there is a lot of truth in this definition, because as human beings, the issue of self interest can take priority in life.



Reading *the Torah* can lead one to realize the importance of Justice for the flourishing and the cohesion of the state. Whereas, reading *the Bible* can provide one with valuable lessons about mercy and modesty. Shakespeare reflected a real image from his own period, in which the Jews were mostly treated in such a humiliating manner. Shakespeare raised the issue of racism and discrimination in Venice particularly as a message of the importance of this behavior through whole Europe. The Jews fought a lot in order to live in Europe, some of them were forced to convert to Christianity, while others were acting as a Christian, just for saving their wealth and life. The law saved only for those who were more powerful than those who were discriminated and treated as "the other".

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