



VCU

Virginia Commonwealth University
VCU Scholars Compass


Menorah Review

VCU University Archives

2008

Menorah Review (No. 69, Summer/Fall, 2008)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/menorah>

 Part of the [History of Religion Commons](#), and the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

© The Author(s)

Recommended Citation

<https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/menorah/67>

This Full Issue is brought to you for free and open access by the VCU University Archives at VCU Scholars Compass. It has been accepted for inclusion in Menorah Review by an authorized administrator of VCU Scholars Compass. For more information, please contact libcompass@vcu.edu.



VCU Menorah Review

For the Enrichment of Jewish Thought

Summer/Fall 2008 no. 69

Peter Bergson's Mission Impossible

A review by Rafael Medoff

Rabbinical Dynamics in the Babylonian Talmud

A review essay by Matthew Schwartz

The Aesthetic Grit of a Yiddish Prose Master Finds Translation

A review essay by Philip Hollander

**The Ancient Grudge: The Merchant of Venice and Shylock's
Christian Problem**

Second of three installments, by Jack D. Spiro

Two Poems

By Richard E. Sherwin

Editor:

Jack D. Spiro

Editorial Consultant:

Cliff Edwards

Production:

VCU University Relations

Contributing Editors:

Paul R. Bartrop

Frank E. Eakin Jr.

Cliff Edwards

Esther Fuchs

Daniel Grossberg

Peter J. Haas

Herbert Hirsch

Brian Horowitz

Frederic Krome

Radael Medoff

Robert Michael

Rochelle L. Millen

Matthew B. Schwartz

Richard E. Sherwin

Jonathan T. Silverman

Kristin Swenson

Melvin I. Urofsky

Sarah B. Watstein

Leon J. Weinberger

Steven F. Windmueller

Peter Bergson's Mission Impossible

***The 'Bergson Boys' and the Origins of Contemporary Zionist Militancy* by Judith Tydor Baumel. Syracuse University Press.**

A review by Rafael Medoff

During the early months of World War Two, a handful of militant Zionist emissaries from Palestine came to the United States on a seemingly impossible mission: to convince America, despite its strongly isolationist mood, to aid European Jewish refugees and support the building of a Jewish Palestine. Judith Tydor Baumel's new book, *The Bergson Boys' and the Origins of Contemporary Zionist Militancy*, asks, "[H]ow did these six young men, working in a foreign environment and speaking a foreign language," manage "to create an apparatus that made those around it stand up and take notice"?

Baumel's study comes at time of growing public and scholarly interest in the work of these young activists, popularly known as the Bergson Group. In addition to this author's books, *A Race Against Death: Peter Bergson, America, and the Holocaust* (2002; co-authored with David S. Wyman) and *Militant Zionism in America: The Rise and Impact of the Jabotinsky Movement in the United States, 1925-1948* (2002), recent scholarship includes the first-ever biographies of the artist and Bergson group activist Arthur Syzk (Joseph P. Ansell, *Arthur Syzk: Artist, Jew, Pole* [2004]); the Bergson Group's Capitol Hill lobbyist (and later anti-McCarthy activist), Maurice Rosenblatt (Shelby Scates, *Maurice Rosenblatt and the Fall of Joseph McCarthy* [2006]); and the 1930s boxing champion Barney Ross, whose work with the Bergson Group has recently come to light (Douglas Century, *Barney Ross* [2006]).

In the public realm, recent developments have included a commemoration on Capitol Hill of the Bergson Group's "We Will Never Die" pageant, which alerted America about the Holocaust; the naming of a street in Chicago after Ben Hecht, the playwright and screenwriter who was one of the group's most important participants; the gubernatorial

proclamation of Elbert Thomas Day, in Utah, in recognition of Senator Thomas's work with Bergson for Holocaust rescue; and panels at several scholarly conferences on related topics. [1]

Prof. Baumel's new book ably traces the paths followed by Bergson (real name: Hillel Kook) and his comrades, beginning with their smuggling of Jews from Europe to Palestine in the late 1930s. Known as *aliyah bet* (unauthorized immigration), this venture, undertaken by the *Irgun Zvai Leumi*, brought more than 20,000 Jews to the Holy Land, in defiance of British immigration restrictions. The onset of war in Europe made it nearly impossible to continue arranging such clandestine journeys.

During 1939-1940, the activists' mentor, Revisionist Zionist leader Vladimir Ze'ev Jabotinsky, dispatched Bergson and others to the United States to seek political and financial support for *aliyah bet* and the creation of a Jewish army to fight alongside the Allies against the Nazis.

Although the Jewish army campaign has been chronicled previously by other historians --most notably Monty N. Penkower-- Baumel does present new information about some of its aspects, such as the Bergson committee's alliance with Irish-Americans, whose own antipathy for the British moved them to become Bergson's political bedfellows. Baumel also makes effective use of interviews she conducted with the leaders of the Bergson Group, especially Alex Rafaeli. Reading their perspective on the controversies, in their own voices, helps bring this chapter of history alive. Rafaeli, Yitshaq Ben-Ami, Samuel Merlin and Eri Jabotinsky are not as well known as Bergson, but they held crucial leadership roles in the committee and were indispensable to the group's successes.

The Jewish army campaign brought to the fore Bergson's two most notable political skills: coalition-building and innovative publicity tactics. Mainstream Jewish leaders sometimes underestimated the breadth of non-Jewish sympathy for their causes. The Bergsonites, by contrast, perceived the existence of "a large reservoir of good will" among

Gentiles (p.53) and thus devoted considerable energy to seeking endorsements from entertainers, intellectuals, and politicians of both parties for the Jewish army cause. The Bergson Group turned those celebrity endorsements into political leverage by plastering them on full-page advertisements that they placed in the *New York Times* and other major newspapers. More than two hundred such ads appeared between 1941 and 1945.

"I think the most effective technique of all of the methods we used was the ads," recalled Congressman Will Rogers, Jr., a Bergson Group supporter and son of the famous entertainer. "They were hard-hitting and they carried tremendous impact... I can remember when they appeared in the paper, around the halls of Congress, there was conversation...I would go down to the floor of Congress and they would be talking about it... Look at this' or Isn't this outrageous?' or Shouldn't something be done' Very effective. Very effective." [2]

In part to avoid being usurped by the Bergsonites, established Jewish organizations in 1942-1943 took an increasingly active role in promoting the Jewish army idea, mostly through quiet lobbying efforts. The combination of Bergson's public pressure and the establishment's backstairs diplomacy eventually persuaded the British, in late 1944, to create the Jewish Brigade. This all-Jewish unit fought the Germans near war's end, and many of its veterans later took part in Israel's War of Independence.

When news of the Germans' systematic annihilation of European Jewry was confirmed in the United States in late 1942, the Bergson Group shifted its focus from the Jewish army to the need for immediate U.S. action to rescue Jews from Hitler. The group changed its name from the Committee for a Jewish Army to the Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe, and the goal of rescue was energetically promoted through rallies, theatrical pageants, lobbying on Capitol, a march by four hundred rabbis in Washington, D.C. and newspaper ads. These efforts culminated, in late 1943, in the introduction of a Congressional resolution urging President Franklin Roosevelt

to establish a rescue agency. The administration tried to block the resolution, but the controversy in Congress and the media, the publicity generated by the Bergsonites, and behind-the-scenes lobbying by Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau, Jr. and his staff combined to compel FDR, in early 1944, to create the War Refugee Board. During the last fifteen months of the war, the Board played a major role in rescuing more than 200,000 Jewish refugees and others.

Baumel discusses, in appropriate detail, the array of obstacles that the Bergsonites faced along the way. Most notable were the variety of attempts by mainstream Jewish leaders to hamper the activists. These included urging the committee's celebrity supporters to withdraw their backing, spreading unfounded rumors of financial irregularities, and urging the government to draft or deport Bergson. Rabbi Stephen Wise, longtime leader of the American Jewish Congress and Zionist Organization of America, went so far as to tell U.S. officials that Bergson was "as equally as great an enemy of the Jews as Hitler, for the reason that his activities could only lead to increased anti-Semitism." [3]

One aspect of the opposition to Bergson that Baumel barely touches, however, is the Federal Bureau of Investigation's extensive spying on the group, as part of the government's search for grounds to shut them down. Her request for U.S. government files on Bergson, submitted years ago under the Freedom of Information and Privacy Acts, was still not fulfilled at the time she was writing her manuscript. This points to one of the disadvantages from which Baumel's book suffers (due to no fault of hers) as a result of the long gap between the completion of her research and its publication. The most recent items listed in her bibliography and footnotes are dated 1998, and the book was first published in Hebrew in 1999; but this English-language edition was not published until 2005. Thus Baumel's narrative seems to have been composed without the benefit of the considerable body of Bergson-related scholarship that appeared between those years. That scholarship included a book detailing the FBI's efforts against Bergson, based on over one thousand pages of FBI documents. [4]

Another of the book's handicaps is Baumel's strong interest in viewing Bergson through the lens of traditional sociological patterns and definitions. Students of sociology will be interested --but other readers less so-- in her frequent references to how a particular Bergson Group activity exemplifies the theories of a particular sociologist. These digressions unfortunately interrupt the flow of the narrative. Nor are matters helped by Baumel's occasional use of heavy sociological jargon like "synchronous multilayered significations with distinctive associations."

At the same time, Baumel's sociological analysis contributes the important observation that the Bergson Group was not just a phenomenon of passing curiosity in American life, but rather "a prototype of an American ethnic/protest group." (p. xxi) She finds that the group's high-profile publicity tactics influenced other ethnic lobbies in the United States, such as the Irish and the Cubans. As for the Bergsonites' influence within the Jewish community, Baumel concludes that they "must be credited with giving birth to the operational and propagandizing patterns utilized by many Jewish and Zionist organizations in Israel and the United States to the present." (p. xxv)

While there is scant evidence connecting the Bergson committee to specific Jewish activist groups of the next generation, there is ample evidence that, as Baumel puts it, "many Jewish and Zionist organizations" in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s used protest tactics that were made legitimate by Bergson. The Soviet Jewry protest movement is the most obvious example of this, and former Soviet Jewry activists are the first to cite the lessons of the Holocaust years as a major influence.

Much has been written about the Bergson Group. Much remains to be written. Baumel's book occupies a particular niche in the historiography. It will take its place alongside previous and forthcoming works that help fill in the gaps as this fascinating chapter of American and American Jewish history continues to unfold.

Notes:

1. For example, the panel on Fiorello La Guardia's response to the Holocaust (including his ties to the Bergson Group) at "America and the Holocaust: Politics, Art, History," the Third National Conference of The David S. Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies, Fordham University School of Law, September 18, 2005; and the panel on the creation of the War Refugee Board (including the Bergson Group's role) at "Blowing the Whistle on Genocide: Josiah E. DuBois, Jr. and the Struggle for an American Response to the Holocaust," the Fourth National Conference of the The David S. Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies, University of Pennsylvania School of Law, June 11, 2006.

2. Martin Ostrow interview with Will Rogers, Jr., 17 February 1992, Tubac, AZ, quoted in David S. Wyman and Rafael Medoff, *A Race Against Death: Peter Bergson, America, and the Holocaust* (New York: The New Press, 2002), 74.

3. Wise, quoted by Nahum Goldmann, in "Attitude of Zionists toward Peter Bergson," Department of State Memorandum of Conversation, 19 May 1944, 867N.01/2347, National Archives.

4. The book was my own *Militant Zionism in America: The Rise and Impact of the Jabotinsky Movement in the United States, 1925-1948* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2002)

Dr. Medoff, a contributing editor, is director of The David S. Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies, www.WymanInstitute.org.

Rabbinical Dynamics in the Babylonian Talmud

***The Culture of the Babylonian Talmud*, by Jeffrey L. Rubenstein.
Baltimore; Johns Hopkins University Press.**

A review essay by Matthew Schwartz

History has had its dark ages the post-Mycenaean Era in Greece, early Medieval Europe. Jewish History has a period which is perhaps not so much dark as gray the age of the Savoraim or, as Professor Jeffrey Rubenstein prefers the Stammaim, which fits unobtrusively between the amoraim and the gaonim. The names of that time are not the well known Hillel and R. Akiva nor Abbaye and Rava, but the likes of R. Rehumai and R. Revai of Rov. Yet these scholars and their colleagues edited the Babylonian Talmud, bringing it into the magnificent form which has so profoundly impacted all of Jewish life and thought ever since.

Professor Rubenstein argues that our Talmud Bavli in many ways reflects, in fact, the world of the stammaim, *their* culture and *their* studies, not only the earlier world of the Amoraim. When we study the culture underlying the Babylonian Talmud, what we are seeing is largely the culture of the stammaitic academy which is the true basis of all later yeshivot. The stammaitic yeshivot were more highly structured and densely populated than ever before, although the change from the Amoraic era was not radical. Dialectical skills became more important than what appears in the Palestinian Talmud. Largely from the Bavli do stories come of sages shamed by erring in scholarly debate. The Bavli retells a number of stories of Palestinian rabbis, but often reworks them to reflect the Babylonian style and context of the stammaitic era, although the editors are careful to avoid fabrication. They were less likely to change a halacha, but a story could be redacted so as to make a point in a way that helps us now to understand their own times.

Rubenstein finds that the house of study developed and its dialectic intensified as the center of study shifted from Judea to Babylonia and progressed into stammaitic times. Stories of scholarly arguments come

more from Babylonian than Palestinian sources, and more attention is given to explaining minority opinions. The Babylonian climate was more combative and competitive, leading at times from scholarly to ad hominem exchanges, and the sources will use military imagery to describe yeshivah debates, e.g. the wars of Torah. However, much of the contention reflects a hyperbolic style that was used in debate but not in general life and so does not indicate an exceptional contentiousness in daily relations.

The Jewish culture reflected in the Babylonian Talmud seems to place also greater emphasis than the Judean on the lineage and status of rabbinic leaders. Some stammaitic stories indicate a sense of women as impediments to study and the finding of true love and union only in the study of Torah. A certain hostility toward the non-scholar appears in the stammaitic materials, although it is likely that actual relations between rabbis and laymen were no less amiable than anywhere else.

What is new in Professor Rubenstein work is the thesis that much of the Talmud reflects the era of the stammaim and not the amoraim. This is plausible and perhaps natural, yet we would like to see something more specific on this in the ancient sources themselves. While the rabbis were hesitant to reveal the Torahs mystical secrets, they certainly held back little on most other matters. Certain historiographical questions assert themselves especially when we deal with an era so long ago and so little known. Political structures and social practices can be described, but does every recorded expression of an amoraic or savoraic sage reflect his own era? The stammaim were individuals with a variety of personalities and ideas and with highly developed dialectic skills. Much of what they said reflected their own individualities that often transcended the ambience of that moment. Their thought world focused not only on the social world of Babylonia, but more on the transcendent task of preserving and enlarging the Torah teaching of revered predecessors.

Professor Rubenstein speculates that the Babylonian academies had changed from the Palestinian of past centuries. The schools were now

larger and more structured, and the teachings tended to be more anonymous so that the response to halachic inquiries would be typically in the name of the entire school body, not merely a single rabbinic scholar (like the *responsa* of later times) and would be composed out of discussion of the assemblage of scholars of the academy. Perhaps the stammaitic school felt itself to be a sort of corporate entity. The Palestinian schools were often called *bet vaad* in the Palestinian sources, while the Babylonian tended to prefer the term *bet midrash*. Sometimes the same story recounted in both Palestinian and Babylonian sources will change the scene from a *bet vaad* or even from a private premises to a *bet midrash*, reflecting the stammatic milieu.

Professor Rubenstein opposes Jacob Neusner's documentary approach to the *Bavli*, which argues that the redactors reworked their sources at will so that it is often impossible to know what the earlier sages actually said. A second approach is faulty in being too uncritically accepting of reports of earlier traditions. In fact, the later sages treated their sources with reverence. They would be arguing and interpreting but not falsifying.

The *savoraim* recognized the work of Rav Ashi and his colleagues as the completion of *horaah* or amoraic teaching, and they saw their main task in completing and editing the work of the *amoraim*. These *savoraim* did not leave us the sort of literature, outside the *Bavli*, that can offer a modern researcher a picture or insight into their lives and work. That this was also a time of some political and social unrest due to wars and persecutions in the Byzantine and Persian empires further complicates our historical picture. Also the time of the *savoraim* was probably not as long as some other historical eras several generations rather than several centuries. The Jewish history student of today feels deeply the lack of personal descriptions of the *savoraim*. Did personal stories circulate about them in their own times like the stories related of the *tanaaim* in the Talmuds or of the rabbis of Eastern Europe closer to our own times?

Matthew Schwartz is a professor in the history department of Wayne

State University and a contributing editor.

The Aesthetic Grit of a Yiddish Prose Master Finds Translation

***The Cross and Other Jewish Stories* by Lamed Shapiro, edited and with an introduction by Leah Garrett.**

New Haven: Yale University Press.

A review essay by Philip Hollander

With the dying out of the Eastern European Jewish immigrants who brought Yiddish literature to America and the successful acculturation of their children to English language culture, Yiddish literature's role in American Jewish life diminished. Those still connected to it became increasingly aware that it would need to be brought to American Jews through the mediation of translation to maintain continued relevance. Among the first to act was Irving Howe, whose 1953 anthology *A Treasury of Yiddish Stories* brought the strong taste of European and American Yiddish culture to an English speaking audience. Over the course of the last 50 years subsequent anthologies and volumes dedicated to individual authors' work have helped to make translated works of Yiddish literature an increasingly important component of American Jewish culture. Due to its ability to combine aesthetic beauty with serious explorations of modern Jewish life, Yiddish literature has attracted American Jews increasingly distant from faith-based Judaism and the form of secular Jewish culture promoted in the State of Israel. Therefore one can't but view the New Yiddish Library project cosponsored by the Fund for the Translation of Jewish Literature and the National Yiddish Book Center as an important contribution to American Jewish cultural life. After re-releasing a number of important collections and putting out improved translations of others key works, the New Yiddish Library series, under the capable editorship of David Roskies, has begun to put out high quality collections by prominent Yiddish authors whose work has yet to effectively penetrate into the consciousness of English language audiences.

The Cross and other Jewish stories, the latest published volume,

provides a broad sampling of the work of Lamed Shapiro. Born in the Ukrainian town of Rzhishchev in 1878, Shapiro came of age simultaneous with a blossoming of Yiddish secular culture in Eastern Europe. S. Y. Abramovitsh, Shalom Aleichem, and I. L. Peretz, published widely and brought inspiration to thousands of aspiring Yiddish writers throughout the Pale of Settlement. Despite his affiliation to this earlier generation of Yiddish writers, Shapiro quickly began taking Yiddish literature in a new direction when he began publishing in 1903. Considering himself first and foremost a writer, Shapiro struggled to give aesthetic expression to Jewish life in the midst of what critic Benjamin Harshav has referred to as the Modern Jewish Revolution. While the classic Yiddish writers lamented the gradual disintegration of the organic Jewish community of the shtetl, Shapiro perceived traditional Eastern European society as something that had already rotted from within leaving Jews alone to face the challenges of modernity a view poignantly voiced in "Eating Days." As a result, one of the key issues animating Shapiro's writing is the possibility of stabilizing Jewish life through the creation of a secular Jewish society and culture on the ruins of the past.

Shapiro saw little hope of bringing about a radical transformation of Eastern European Jewish life. This pessimism finds expression in stories such as *The Cross*, *The Kiss*, and *The Jewish Regime*. Jewish characters reveal vital life forces teeming within them that allow them to avenge acts of persecution perpetrated against them by their non-Jewish neighbors. But they prove incapable of harnessing these heretofore hidden energies for constructive aims. In addition, "The Jewish Regime" denies the ability of an impotent Jewish intelligentsia to effectively lead the people in new directions and foresees little substantive change in the lives of Eastern European Jews.

Despite his seeming pessimism, however, Shapiro's dedication to his writing and his belief in its ability to enrich the lives of his readers through its artistry show him to be a true disciple of Peretz, the high priest of Jewish cultural renewal. With naturalism and lyrical impressionism occupying the poles of early twentieth century Yiddish prose,

Shapiro proved to be one of the leading representatives of the pole of lyrical impressionism. As Marshal McLuhan asserted, "the medium is the message," and even when Shapiro narrates a Russian soldiers cannibalistic murder and rape of a Jewish woman in *White Challah*, the reader cant help but be overwhelmed by the beauty of the narrative. Similar artistry can be noted in "In the Dead Town." Through the filtering of experience through the limited consciousness of the young orphan Beylke, both nature and the Jewish cemetery where the story is set are defamiliarized. Through the act of reading, one experiences things anew as Beylkes impressions are deciphered and gains the opportunity to look at the world with fresh eyes attune to its inherent beauty. The need to embrace the beauty that comes with the pain and suffering of the world is also promoted in the idyllic short story "Smoke," which displays a more lyrical and less impressionistic style. Here, the protagonist Menasha's ability to recognize the duality of existence, derived from the revelation of the profound pleasure that accompanies the discomfort of tobacco smoking, helps guide him through a long successful business career after a childhood of poverty.

Shapiro's dedication to style and his arrival in America in 1905 make it natural to group him together with the emergent Yiddish literary group *Di Yunge*, who rose to prominence in America at the beginning of the twentieth century, but efforts to promote him as an American master, as well as the division of the current collection into three parts *Progrom Tales*, *The Old World*, and *The New World* overstate America's place in Shapiro's work and his perception of himself as an American. Regardless of decades spent in America and the absence of visceral European anti-Semitism in America, Shapiros fundamental worldview remained unchanged following his immigration. His long lyrical tale "At Sea" rejects the idea of a promised land and asserts that every individual is fundamentally at sea attempting to survive in a world without firm ground upon which to stand. Pogroms appear frequently in Shapiro's writing not because they were the cause of this instability, but rather because they were a symptom and effective symbol of it. Shapiro would have denied the premise of American exceptionalism

upon which this collection is organized, and it would have proved more true to his legacy to have organized the whole collection chronologically, since this would have allowed readers to more effectively track his stylistic development. Nonetheless this collection gives English readers access to one of the great Yiddish writers and those interested in finding out what came between Shalom Aleichem and Isaac Bashevis Singer would be well served by picking up this volume.

Philip Hollander is Sizeler Professor of Jewish Studies at Tulane University.

The Ancient Grudge: The Merchant of Venice and Shylock's Christian Problem

Second of three installments, by Jack D. Spiro

3. The Grudge

How They Storm!

The relationship between the two major antagonists of the play is one of mutual, unresolved hatred. It is primarily a relationship based on an *ancient grudge*, deeply rooted in history and myth, and the incapacity of both to make an attempt to know each other, above all else, as human beings.

Two terms used by Shylock reveal how ancient the grudge is: (1) publican, (1.3.35) refers to Roman oppressors of Jews, and (2) catch him on the hip, (1.3.41) a reminder of Jacobs wrestling with a mysterious being and winning the struggle in the biblical story.

How ancient is this grudge?

The Beginnings

First, we must return to its roots in the New Testament. In Matthew 27.24-26, Pilate says he is innocent of Jesus blood. And all the people answered, His blood be on us and on our children. With their own confession of complicity in the crucifixion, according to Matthew's account, the Jewish people have been haunted ever since with the charge of deicide a charge that continued well into the 20th century, necessitating the Second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church to declare in 1965 that the Jews should not be presented as repudiated or cursed by God.

In the Book of Mark, Jews are made responsible for the execution of John the Baptist (1.14, 6.14-29). It was also the Jews, according to Mark, who killed Jesus; in fact, Roman participation does not appear at all. The people who hated Jesus included Pharisees, scribes, priests,

Herodians, Herod Antipas, Sadducees, the High Priest, the Sanhedrin, and the crowds. The only Jews missing from this blacklist are the Essenes who sequestered themselves around the Dead Sea.

In both Luke and Acts, considered by many scholars to be written by the same author, Jews are presented as faithless to the real Judaism. True Judaism is synonymous with Christianity. The author also states that the Jews tried to kill Jesus (4.16-17). When Jesus entered Jerusalem he wept, knowing that its eventual destruction would be caused by the Jews blindness in not recognizing him as the true Messiah. Pontius Pilate found Jesus innocent, but the Jews demanded his crucifixion (23.13f). Although out of character for a Roman procurator, Pilate relented.

Jesus' enemies, according to the Book of John, are no longer Pharisees, scribes, elders, and Sadducees. Jews in general are the enemies. They are considered outsiders and opponents of Jesus. Over the Sabbath controversy in 5.1-47, the Jews express their desire to kill Jesus a theme repeated several times. Jesus also accuses Jews of not being faithful to Abraham or to Moses (5.46, 8.31-37). John clearly indicates that Jews were responsible for the crucifixion (chapters 18 and 19).

Paul denounces the Jews as filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters; haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful; inventors of evil things; covenant-breakers; without natural affection, unmerciful. (Romans 1.29-32)

Peter, most prominent of the disciples and first bishop of Rome, preached at Jerusalem: Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God...this Jesus, delivered up according to definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men....This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses....Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified. (Acts 2.22-24, 32, 36)

Nothing about the status of Jews in relation to Christianity is left to the imagination. These passages and others in the New Testament the source of the ancient grudge have sown the seeds of animosity and belligerence ever since and still do today simply because they are still heedfully read.

Derived from the biblical accusations against Jews, St. Justin (100-165 C.E.) was the first official of the Church to express the idea, in his *Dialogue with Trypho* that all the adversity experienced by Jews was the consequence of divine punishment for the crime of deicide. In the dialogue, (a euphemism for what became known in Jewish history as a disputation (*veekuach* in Hebrew), Justin says to Trypho, identified by many scholars as Rabbi Tarphon: [The tribulations that came upon the Jews) were justly imposed upon you, for you have murdered the Just One.

One of the most influential of all Church Fathers, Origen (circa 185-254), wrote *Against Celsus*, which is a critique of Judaism. He states with confidence that [the Jewish people] will never be restored to their former condition. For they committed a crime of the most unhallowed kind, in conspiring against the Savior of the human race....

Therefore the villainy that Shylock claims Antonio to have taught him commenced with the Christian Scriptures, further nurtured by Justin, Origen and other Church Fathers, continuing its propagation when Constantine the Great (306-337) converted to Christianity, eventually transforming Christianity into the official religion of the Roman Empire.

As a result of his conversion, Constantine enacted a series of laws against the Jews, such as the following:

1. We wish to make it known to the Jews and their elders and their patriarchs that if, after the enactment of this law, any one of them dares to attack with stones or some other manifestation of anger another who has fled their dangerous sect and attached himself to the worship of God [Christianity], he must speedily be given to the flames and burnt together with all his accomplices.

Moreover, if any one of the population should join their abominable sect and attend their meetings, he will bear with them the deserved penalties. [October 18, 315]

2. This pertains to women, who live in our weaving factories and whom Jews, in their foulness, take in marriage. It is decreed that these women are to be restored to the weaving factories [meaning that marriages with Jews are dissolved]. This prohibition [of intermarriage] is to be preserved for the future lest the Jews induce Christian women to share their shameful lives. If they do this, they will subject themselves to a sentence of death.... [August 13, 339]

Constantine also convened the Council of Nicaea in 325, which passed the following admonition: Henceforward let us have nothing in common with this odious people, the Jews.

After Christianity became the official religion of the state, Theodosius I of the fourth century abolished all synagogues. The Theodosian Code of the fifth century, decreed by Theodosius II, designated Jews as *inferiores* and *perversi* and regarded Judaism as *secta nefaria*.

In his *Homilies against the Jews*, John Chrysostom, presbyter of Antioch at the end of the fourth century, identified Jews as murderers of Christ:

Do not be surprised if I have called the Jews wretched. They are truly wretched and miserable for they have received many good things from God yet they have spurned them and violently cast them away....The Jews were branches of the holy root, but they were lopped off....They read the prophets from ancient times, yet they crucified the one spoken of by the prophets....They were called to sonship, but they degenerated to the level of dogs....They have kicked up their hooves refusing to bear the yoke of Christ and to draw the plow of his teaching....They are *suited only for slaughter* [italics mine]....I said that the synagogue is no better than the theater...the synagogue is not only a house of prostitution and a theater, it is also a hideout for thieves and a den of wild animals....When God forsakes a place it becomes a dwelling

place for demons....If they are ignorant of the Father, if they crucified the son, and spurned the aid of the Spirit, can one not declare with confidence that the synagogue is a dwelling place of demons? God is not worshiped there. Far from it! Rather the synagogue is a temple of idolatry.

Chrysostom's comparison of Jews to dogs, an epithet frequently used against Shylock, appears to be based on the statement allegedly made by Jesus in Matthew 15.26 that bread reserved for the sons must not be thrown to the dogs.

St. Isidore of the seventh century, in his *De Fidei Catholica ex veteri et novo Testamento contra Judaeis*, declared: *Judaei posteritatem suam damnaverunt* Because the Jews killed Christ, it brought damnation on their posterity, an idea that he based on Matthew 26.25: His blood be upon us and upon our children.

In the ninth century, Agobard, bishop of Lyons, wrote the first anti-Semitic pamphlet since ancient times. Published in 822, it was called *De Insolentia Judaeorum*.

The Practice of Usury

This tradition of hatred was carried over into the Renaissance, accompanied by another tradition of the Jew as usurer, based on the story of Judas' betrayal of Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. It was the Christian world, however, that forced Jews into usury; i.e., producing money from a concentration on finance and commerce since they were not permitted, by Christian decrees, to practice other trades and professions.

No matter; they were still condemned for practicing usury as we read in *The Prioress's Tale* by Geoffrey Chaucer (c. 1340-1400). This story is typical of the medieval genre in its contemptuous descriptions of Jews and the accusations against them. Chaucer also availed himself of the legend of little Hugh of Lincoln, allegedly murdered by Jews, and he gave poetic expression to the appalling charge of ritual murder

as well. The medieval caricatures are related in the following excerpts from Chaucer's story.

*There was in Asia, in a great city,
Amidst Christian folk, a Jewish quarter,
Maintained by a lord of that country
For foul usury and vile gain,
Hateful to Christ and to His Fellowship;
And through the street men could ride or walk,
For it was public, and open at either end.
A small school of Christian people stood
Down at the farther end, in which there were
Many children, born of Christian blood,
Who studied in that school, year by year,
The sort of learning that was in use there,
That is to say, to sing and to read,
As little children do in their childhood.
Among these children was a widows son,
A little schoolboy, seven years of age,
Who on the way to school every day,
And other times too, whenever he saw the statue
Of Christ's Mother, he was accustomed,
As had been taught him, to kneel down and say
His Ave Maria, as he went on his way.
So had this widow taught her little son
Our blessed Lady, Christ's Mother dear,
To worship ever, and he never forgot it,
For an innocent child will always learn quickly;*

.....

*As I have said, through the Jewish quarter
This little child, as he went back and forth,
Most joyously then would he sing and chant.*

.....

*Our first enemy, the serpent Satan,
Who has his wasps nest in the Jewish heart,
Swelled up and said, O Hebrew people, alas!
Is this something that seems decent to you,
That such a boy should walk as he pleases
In scorn of you, and sing of such a theme
As is opposed to the sanctity of your laws?
Thenceforth the Jews conspired
To drive this innocent out of this world;
A murderer for this purpose they hired,
Who in an alley had a secret hiding-place;
And as the child began to walk by there,
This cursed Jew seized him and held him fast,
And cut his throat, and threw him in a pit.
I say that in a cesspool they threw him
Where the Jews relieved their bowels.
O cursed modern compatriots of Herod,
What can your evil intentions avail you?
Murder will out, in truth it will not fail,
And especially where it redounds to Gods glory,
The blood cries out on your cursed deed.
[The widow looked everywhere for her child]
Until finally she made the discovery
That he was last seen in the Jewish quarter.*

.....

*She called, and at last she brought it about
That she sought him amongst the cursed Jew.
She inquired and she piteously begged
Every Jew who lived in that place
To tell her if her child had passed by there.
[Eventually a magistrate came and had the Jews bound]*

.....

*With torment and with shameful death each one
Of those Jews, the magistrate ordered to be executed,
Who knew of this murder and that immediately;
He would not countenance any such cursedness.
Evil shall be allotted to those who deserve evil.
Therefore he had them dragged by wild horses,
And after that he hanged them according to law.*

.....

*O young Hugh of Lincoln, also slain
By cursed Jews, as is well known,
Since it was but a little while ago.....*

Throughout this period, the Church continued to condemn lending money at a profit, but St. Ambrose made an allowance for Christians dealing with Jews. He wrote: From him [the Jew] exact usury whom it would be no crime to kill. Saint Bernardine of Siena (1380-1444, canonized in 1450) was the Church's dissenting voice with his less

parochial belief that money as capital has a creative power (*quandan seminalem rationem*). Bloom 1986, pp. 1-7-12 0)

In Shakespeare's day usury became a knotty problem because of the development of capitalism even though it still was a matter of making barren metal breed more metal, for when did friendship take a breed for barren metal of his friend? (1.3.134) Money-lending became essential for the nascent capitalism of the Elizabethan period. Even Elizabeth borrowed money from the Antwerp loan market. Based on the passage about usury in Deuteronomy 23.19f, Calvin argued that usury was permissible as a loan to someone other than your brother, because brotherhood can be cultivated through the nurturance of a universal "otherhood." He also disagreed that money breeds money, arguing that money is similar to land and other commodities which one pays for in order to receive. As a result of this argument, many Puritans became money-lenders. (Spencer 1988, p. 85)

In Francis Bacons essay, *On Usury*, he argued that it was useless to speak of abolishing it. Shakespeare himself, as well as his father John, made investments; he was a moneylender. (Gross 1992, 59) In fact, in Elizabethan England, Christians were the usurers since the land was *Judenrein* except for the few who practiced Judaism secretly.

A law, passed by Parliament in 1571 revealing the ambivalence of this august assembly, said that usury was a mortal sin but still legal as long as it did not exceed 10 percent. Shakespeare must have understood the contradictions at work in his society with regard to the necessity of interest-bearing loans, especially with Venice as his setting for the play a commercial republic, a mercantile world of pure materialism, a center of international trade whose credibility depended on steadfastness in upholding its own laws. So Shylock became his fall guy for goading theater-goers into holding a mirror up to the nature of their own pecuniary interests and practices. As Braudel expressed it, if [the Jews of the Renaissance period] had not existed, it would surely have been necessary to invent them. (1982, 2:166) Shakespeare himself wrote in the sixth Sonnet: That is not forbidden usury, /Which happiest [makes

fortunate] those that pay the willing loan.

But let's continue with our brief survey of the ancient grudge, leading up to Shakespeare's time, money-lending and its consequences being only one source of the antipathy.

Papal and Kingly Thrones

I have already mentioned Pope Gregory I of the sixth century. His papal namesake, Gregory VII (1073-1085) decreed that Jews could not hold office in Christian countries. Since his decree was initially motivated by King Alphonso of Spain's tolerant attitude to Jews, the pope wrote to him in 1080:

As we feel impelled to congratulate you on the progress of your fame, so at the same time must we deprecate the harm you do. We admonish your Highness that you must cease allowing the Jews to rule over the Christians and exercise authority over them. For to allow the Christians to be subordinate to the Jews, and to subject them to their judgment, is the same as oppressing God's Church and exalting Satan's synagogue. To wish to please Christ's enemies means to treat Christ himself with contumely.

When Henry IV, Emperor of Germany, learned of the atrocities committed against the Jews of Bohemia, he allowed those converted under duress to return to their Jewish faith. But Pope Clement III (1080-1100) disapproved and wrote to Henry: We have heard that the baptized Jews have been permitted to leave the Church. This is unexampled and sinful; and we demand of all our brethren that they take care that the sacrament of the Church be not desecrated by the Jews.

In the first Crusade of 1096, approximately 12,000 Jews were slaughtered by Christian pilgrims. When he organized a second Crusade in the middle of the 12th century, Bernard, abbot of Clairvaux, wanted to avoid a similar tragedy of bloodshed. He wrote to the crusaders that Jews, although enemies of Christ, should not be killed:

I have heard with great joy of the zeal for God's glory which burns in

your midst. But your zeal needs the timely restraint of knowledge. The Jews are not to be persecuted, killed or even put to flight....The Jews are for us the living words of Scripture, for they remind us always of what our Lord suffered. They are dispersed all over the world so that by expiating their crime they may be everywhere the living witnesses of our redemption....when the time is ripe all Israel shall be saved. But those who die before will remain in death. I will not mention those Christian money-lenders, if they can be called Christian, who, where there are no Jews, act, I grieve to say, in a manner worse than any Jew. If the Jews are utterly wiped out, what will become of our hope for their promised salvation, their eventual conversion? If the pagans were similarly subjugated to us then, in my opinion, we should wait for them rather than seek them out with swords. But as they have now begun to attack us, it is necessary for those of us who do not carry a sword in vain to repel them with force. It is an act of Christian piety both to vanquish the proud and also to spare the subjected, especially those for whom we have a law and a promise, and whose flesh was shared by Christ whose name be forever blessed.

Bernard was also the one who invented the verb, to Jew, meaning to lend money at interest.

Monarchs of the Holy Roman Empire also created policies for dealing with their Jewish problem. In 1179, Frederick Barbarossa (1152-1190) decreed that Jews belong to the imperial treasury. He wrote:

It is the duty of our imperial office, demanded alike by justice and by reason, that we safeguard the property, persons, peace, and ancestral customs of all our subjects, not only those of our own faith, but those who live after the tradition of their fathers. We therefore make known that we shall assiduously protect the Jews of our empire, who enjoy a special claim upon our regard in that they belong to the imperial treasury.

Frederick III, grandson of Barbarossa, affirmed the policy of *Kammerknechte* (servants of the Imperial Chamber) in 1236 as a way of

solving the Jewish problem: In order to assure the Jews of Germany peace and security [he proclaimed them to be] *servi camerae nostrae* (servants of our treasury). A basic formula came out of these decrees: *Ipsi Judaei et omnia sua regis sunt* (The Jews and all they have belong to the king).

Another type of anti-Jewish incident took place for the first time in 1244 with the burning of cartloads of the Talmud in Paris and in Rome, reaching its conflagrational climax in the sixteenth century. Many of these burnings were instigated by apostate Jews who had converted; they also became responsible for a series of inimical disputations between Jews and Christians; in fact one of the disputations was the impetus for the first Talmud burning, to be discussed later.

Almost 100 years later, King Charles IV (1347) decreed about the Jews in his empire: We can do with them as we choose.

After the debacle of the First Crusade, it was imperative to arouse enthusiasm for the second one. Pope Eugene III (1145-1153) announced that all those who joined the holy war in the East would be exempt from paying interest on debts owed to Jewish creditors.

Pope Innocent III's power (1198-1216) was frequently directed against Jews. He would rebuke kings who did not persecute their Jewish subjects. When King Philip Augustus of France recalled the Jews he had expelled, because of his need for financial help, Innocent objected to what he called preferential treatment. Innocent also demanded that King Alphonso the Noble of Castile collect tithes from the Jews for the Church. He threatened to excommunicate Christians who engaged in commerce with Jews who refused to pay these taxes. In 1208 he wrote: The Jews, like the fratricide Cain, are doomed to wander about the earth as fugitives and vagabonds and their faces must be covered with shame. They are under no circumstances to be protected by Christian princes, but, on the contrary, to be condemned to serfdom. He also wrote: It is pleasing to God that [the Jews] should be oppressed by the servitude they earned when they raised sacrilegious

hands against Him who had come to confer true liberty upon them.

At the Fourth Lateran Council, convened by Innocent, four decrees were passed with respect to Jews; the most diabolical was that all Jews 12 years of age and over had to wear a distinctive Jewish badge, a piece of yellow fabric that was sewn on the sleeve or breast. Beginning as early as the 13th century, the *Judensau* was carved on choir stalls, pillars, and walls in churches depicting a sow giving suck to piglets and Jews. [*Encyclopedia Judaica*, 3.118] The Council also demanded that Jews not appear in public during Easter time, which seems to be the time that Shylock asked Jessica to close up the house and make sure it was locked the very night that Jessica ran away with Lorenzo and deceived her father.

The very existence of Jews by this time was blasphemous; indeed, it was a crime simply to be Jewish, presaging a catastrophic series of events that would occur in Europe over 700 years later.

Honorius III (1216-1227), who succeeded Innocent, took pains that the decrees of his predecessor and of the Lateran Council were enforced. Gregory IX (1227-1241) followed this papal policy by exhorting bishops and kings to harass the Jews. The king of Hungary was threatened with excommunication, and other severe measures, if he would not agree to do the papal bidding. Gregory IX also initiated the confiscation and burning of the Talmud on the grounds that it perverted the New Testament.

The next obscenity was the censorship of Jewish books, instituted by Pope Clement IV (1265-1268), for the purpose of deleting all passages which the Church deemed objectionable. Clement also carried on Gregory's war against the Talmud, which was primarily initiated by an apostate, Nicholas Donin. He charged that the Talmud contained many blasphemies against both Jesus and Mary. The accusation prompted a disputation in 1240. Held in Paris, Donin was pitted against Rabbi Yechiel, once Donin's mentor. The result was the Talmud was found guilty and burned. Twenty-three cartloads of Talmudic texts, copied by

hand, were set on fire.

The most infamous of all public disputations, including the classical one between Justin and Trypho, was the forced one in Barcelona between Rabbi Moses ben Nachman (commonly known as Nachmanides) and several opponents including another apostate, Pablo Christiani. Sponsored by James I, king of Aragon, in 1263, Nachmanides' opponents wanted him to refute their assertion that the Talmud recognized Jesus as the Messiah. There are two accounts of the debate, one Christian and the other by Nachmanides himself. Each declares his side to be victorious. But James eventually declared the disputation to be a virtual stalemate. Nachmanides' situation, however, had become untenable, and he left his home in Barcelona for Jerusalem. After this unfortunate experience of being forced into a debate, Jewish leaders felt it was prudent to remain silent when Judaism was smeared by Christians.

One of the most painful and tragic times for European Jews was the period of the Black Death (*circa* 1348-1350). For example, the city fathers of Lubeck proclaimed: It is to be feared that neither the plague nor the misery of humanity through which the Christian populace are exploited by the Jews will cease as long as the Jews are permitted to remain under the protection of lord or prince, and can bribe these lords in order to continue their nefarious work.

Friedrich, the Margrave of Meissen, wrote to his subjects: You are aware that we have everywhere allowed our Jews access to our wells, with the result that out of their hatred for Christians and Christendom they have poisoned all our water. Since we have in our hands assured proof of this, we herewith counsel you to allow the Jews to be put to death for the glory of God. This was definitely carrying the ancient grudge much too far since Jews drank the same water and also died from the same plague. They still did the poisoning. By the end of the plague, nearly 350 Jewish communities were exterminated.

If not in power, Eugene IV (1431-1447) equaled Innocent III in Jew-hatred. In 1442 he issued a bull against Castilian Jews which,

among other things, declared all indulgences granted by his predecessors to be annulled; forbade Christians to associate with Jews; prohibited the building of new synagogues; and ordered the Jews to remain in seclusion during Passion Week.

When Nicholas V (1447-1455) succeeded to the papal throne, he extended his predecessors Castilian bull to the Italian Jews. In another bull (1451), he re-confirmed the previous enactments and also abrogated all the remaining rights and privileges of the Jews in Spain and Italy . On learning that many Spanish Jews who had been baptized were clandestinely practicing Judaism (Marranos), he empowered the Inquisition to punish the Judaizers.

The Holy Office of the Inquisition was instituted in 1478 when Pope Sixtus IV (1471-1484) issued a bull authorizing Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain to appoint the inquisitors. Since both papacy and royalty were alert to the lucrative aspects of the Inquisition, with the confiscation of property belonging to the accused, they competed for the inquisitorial appointments. But royalty won out, although Sixtus never lost his hold. He eventually appointed the infamous Torquemada to be Inquisitor-General of Spain , which culminated in the expulsion of all Spanish Jews in 1492, four months after they were given the choice to convert or leave their homeland. When many of the Spanish Jews eventually made their way to Rome, Pope Alexander VI (1492-1503) admitted them in return for a substantial sum.

In 1542, Pietro Cardinal Caraffa persuaded Pope Paul III to institute the Inquisition in Rome. Caraffa was obsessed with hatred of Jews and other heretics. He and his officers invaded Jewish homes in many Italian cities and confiscated Talmuds and other Hebrew books for the fire.

When Caraffa became Pope Paul IV (1555-1559), the Jews of Rome were restricted to the ghetto and only one synagogue. The men had to wear green caps and the women green veils. They could not own property, and those who already owned land had to sell at one-fifth of

the value. Many Jews were also subjected to forced labor on Roman walls. He also ordered all copies of the Talmud in the Papal States to be destroyed. Most Jewish schools were closed, and worshipers in the synagogues were harassed.

Pius V (1566-1572) extended Caraffas' anti-Jewish edicts from the Papal States to the entire Catholic realm. In 1569 he issued a bull decreeing the expulsion of all Jews from the Papal States, with the exception of Rome and Ancona. Since they were ordered to depart within three months, the majority had to leave possessions and properties behind to be confiscated by the Church.

Gregory XIII (1572-1585) ruled that if Christians consulted Jewish physicians, both would be punished. He prohibited Jews to teach any doctrine objectionable to the Church. He ordered priests to deliver conversion sermons in synagogues at Sabbath and holiday services, which had to be attended by at least one-third of the community.

A Protestant Response

With the Protestant Reformation, Martin Luther gave Jews a sense of optimism; perhaps, at last, there would be some constructive changes in Jewish-Christian relations. In a work written in 1523, he expressed a positive position towards Jews with the hope that they would eventually convert to Christianity. This, in part, is what he wrote:

I would advise and beg everyone to deal kindly with the Jews and to instruct them in the Scriptures; in such a case we could expect them to come over to us. If, however, we use brute force and slander them, saying that they need the blood of Christians to get rid of their stench and I know not what other nonsense of that kind, and treat them like dogs, what good can we expect of them? Finally, how can we expect them to improve if we forbid them to work among us and to have social intercourse with us, and so force them into usury? If we wish to make them better, we must deal with them not according to the law of the pope, but according to the law of Christian charity....

Twenty years later, when Luther realized that Jews were not going to convert, this is what he wrote:

What then shall we Christians do with this damned, rejected race of Jews? Since they live among us and we know about their lying and blasphemy and cursing, we can not tolerate them if we do not wish to share in their lies, curses, and blasphemy....Let me give you honest advice:....their synagogues or churches should be set on fire.... And this ought to be done for the honor of God and of Christianity.... their homes should be broken down and destroyed....They ought to be put under one roof or in a stable, like gypsies, in order that they may realize that they are not masters in our land....they should be deprived of their prayer-books and Talmuds in which such idolatry, lies, cursing, and blasphemy are taught...their rabbis must be forbidden under threat of death to teach any more....all their cash and valuable of silver and gold ought to be taken from them and put aside for safe keeping. For this reason, as said before, everything that they possess they stole and robbed from us through their usury, for they have no other means of support....away with them....if this advice of mine does not suit you, then find a better one so that you and we may all be free of this insufferable devilish burden the Jews. How could Shylock possibly better [this] instruction?

William Tyndale, who translated the New Testament into English in 1525 and prepared tracts defending the English Reformation, wrote this in his introduction:

...Christ says to the Jews, the kingdom of heaven shall be taken from you and given to a nation that will bring forth the fruits thereof, as it is come to pass. For the Jews have lost the spiritual knowledge of God and of his commandments and also of all the scripture, so that they can understand nothing godly. And the door is locked up that all their knocking is in vain, though many of them take great pain for Gods sake.

Sir Walter Raleigh, quoting Cyrillus at the beginning of his statement,

wrote:

Cain and Abel were figures of Christ and of the Jews;....as Cain after that he had slain Abel unjustly, he had thenceforth not certain abiding in the world; so the Jews, after they had crucified the Son of God, became Renegades; and it is true, that the Jews had never since any certain estate, commonwealth, or prince of their own upon the earth.

In the Epistle Dedicatory to the English translation of Mornay's *The Trueness of the Christian Religion* (1587), Golding contends that if any atheist infidel or Jew having read this his work with advisement shall yet deny the Christian religion to be the true and only pathway to eternal felicity, and all other religions to be mere vanity, and wickedness; must needs show himself utterly void of human sense or else obstinately and willfully bent to impugn the manifest truth against the continual testimony of his own conscience.

One of the most prestigious lawyers of the Elizabethan period was Chief Justice Coke who believed that since Jews were natural enemies, it was impossible for there to be peace between them, as with the Devil, whose subjects they are, and the Christians.

This consistent and persistent litany of maledictions, and countless more, brings us inevitably to England's Roderigo Lopez, Christopher Marlowe, and William Shakespeare in the latter part of the sixteenth century.

4. Our Sacred Nation

The Lopez Trial and English Marranos

Dr. Roderigo Lopez (1525-1594) became Queen Elizabeth's physician in 1586. Eight years later he was convicted of high treason for allegedly attempting to poison her. A woodcut of 1627 shows Lopez engaged in the alleged conspiracy. [see *Encyclopedia Judaica* 11.490] Born in Portugal, he came to London around 1559 and practiced medicine there in the highest circles. He accepted the coveted invitation to give the annual Anatomical Lecture before the College of Physicians in

1569.

The leader of London's Marrano community at the time was Hector Nunez. Marranos were crypto-Jews from Spain and Portugal who conformed outwardly to Christianity while in secret they continued the practices of Judaism. Not only a physician of note, Nunez was also prominent in foreign trade. Another prominent Marrano merchant was Jorge Anes, his name later anglicized to Ames. He had two sons, Francis and Dunstan. Francis was employed by Sir Francis Drake to do intelligence work in the Azores. Dunstan, who was also in trade, had a daughter, who became the wife of Roderigo Lopez.

In 1586 Lopez received the post of chief physician to the Queen. He was probably baptized in Portugal at birth, which was the price paid by Jews for remaining in their country after the Expulsion. He was therefore a Christian, but he made no secret of his Jewish background.

Like many expatriate Portugese, Lopez was distressed over the loss of his country's independence in 1580 when it was conquered by the hated King Philip II of Spain . As a result, the entire Marrano community of London supported Don Antonio, pretender to the throne of Portugal , who in turn spent much of his exile in England drumming up support for an army of liberation to be landed and protected by Elizabeth's navy. England considered it advantageous to use him in its conflicts with Spain prior to the Spanish Armada. Lopez acted as Don Antonio's secretary and interpreter.

However, Lopez was targeted by Spanish agents in England in March 1587 as a man with the opportunity of slipping something fatal into Don Antonio's beer. Hence, he became a double-agent a Spanish spy pretending to be loyal to Don Antonio.

Ironically, the Earl of Essex came to Lopez in 1590 and asked the good doctor to be a double-agent, pretending to work for Spain but actually to report to Essex. Lopez's refusal offended Essex.

Eventually Lopez incriminated himself by communicating with another

Spanish spy in a letter that was intercepted. He was arrested on January 21, 1594. His trial opened at the Guildhall on February 28, 1594 before 15 judges. The major problem was not that he was a secret Jew but that he was the Queens personal physician. His conviction was based on his secret contacts with the Spanish Crown and his numerous discussions about the possibility of poisoning the Queen.

In spite of the justifiable reason for the trial, however, Sir Edward Coke, solicitor-general, described Lopez during the trial as a perjured and murdering villain and Jewish doctor, worse than Judas himself. So his Jewish identity was revealed with bigoted defamation.

The Second Treason Act of Elizabeth (1571) defined the crime clearly, including acts of any person who, within the realm or without, [shall] encompass, imagine, invent, devise, or intend the death or destruction, or any bodily harm tending to death, destruction, maim or wounding of the royal person of the same our sovereign lady Queen Elizabeth. Found guilty, Lopez was hanged, drawn, and quartered at Tyburn on June 7, 1594

There were about 80 to 100 Marranos in London at the time. The Inquisition and forced conversion were the impetus for migrations to England where the small Marrano community developed.

The first episode of forced conversion took place in Spain in June 1391. Most of the Jews in Seville were killed. The survivors were given the choice to convert or die. This same occurred throughout most of Spain : Conversion or death. Most of the Spanish Jews did convert at the time, but tried to observe Judaism secretly. Eventually the term Marrano was used for these converted Jews, described succinctly by Cecil Roth:

Outwardly they lived as Christians. They took their children to church to be baptized, though they hastened to wash off the traces of the ceremony as soon as they returned home. They would go to the priest to be married, though they were not content with the ceremony and, in the privacy of their houses, performed another to implement it...

Their disbelief in the dogmas of the Church was notorious, and...not always concealed. They kept all the traditional [Jewish] ceremonies, in some instances down to the last details. They observed the Sabbath so far as lay in their power; and it was possible to see, from a height overlooking any city, how many chimneys were smokeless on that day...they married exclusively amongst themselves....In race, in belief, and...in practice, they remained as they had been before conversion. They were Jews in all but name, and Christians in nothing but form. They were moreover able to transmit their disbelief to their children, who, though born in the dominant faith and baptized at birth, were as little sincere in their attachment to it as their fathers. (1978, p. 20)

James Shapiro writes about extant records of this Marrano community in England: The records of the Inquisitions in Spain, Portugal, and Italy provide the most detailed evidence of Jewish life in England at this time....We learn, for example, from the testimony of Gaspar Lopez before inquisitors on December 27, 1540, that he knew Alves Lopez in London in whose house...he lived for four or five days. Lopez told the inquisitors that his host holds a synagogue in his house and lives in the Hebrew manner, though in secret....in this synagogue they went on one day only, the Sabbath; and that on that day there came to Alves's house other false Christians to the number of about twenty.... (1996, pp. 68-69)

Shapiro also tells of the testimony of a Pedro de Santa Cruz who had been detained in England as a prisoner of war in 1588, but was allowed to return to Madrid. He offered this statement: [It] is public and notorious in London that by race they are all Jews, and it is notorious that in their own homes they live as such observing their Jewish rites; but publicly they attend Lutheran Churches, and listen to the sermons, and take the bread and wine in the manner and form as do the other heretics [Protestants]. (1996, pp. 70-71)

Business relations with England attracted many to the country. In the records such names as Lopez, Da Costa, Alvarez, Mendez, and Nunez appear. Also in London an institution known as *Domus Conversorum*

was established in 1233 by Henry III as a home for Jews who converted to Christianity. Since it continued until approximately 1609, Shakespeare may have been familiar with it. It was supported in various ways by the crown, with converts living there and receiving pensions from the government even during Elizabeth's reign. In converting to Christianity, all their goods were taken from them; therefore, ironically, they needed state support. Matthew Paris, who witnessed the original building in Chancery Lane, wrote that King Henry decided to construct the *Domus Conversorum* for the ransom of his soul and that of his father, King John, and all their ancestors. To this House converted Jews retired, leaving their Jewish blindness, and had a home and a safe refuge for their whole lives, living under an honorable rule, with sufficient sustenance without service work or the profits of usury. So it happened that in a short time a large number were collected there. And now, being baptized and instructed in the Christian way, they live a praiseworthy life under a Governor specially appointed. (Hyamson 1908, p. 127) Similarly, Shylock is forced to convert with all his wealth transferred to his heirs and to the coffers of the state.

Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*

Marlowe's play was a great success when it opened on February 26, 1592. It was forced to close for a time due to the outbreak of a plague, but reopened in 1594 at the time of Dr. Lopez's trial, appearing also in print that same year. He was hanged while Shakespeare's play *Titus Andronicus* was playing at Newington Butts and when he was writing *The Merchant of Venice*. Some scholars believe that 4.1.133-137 alludes to the execution. Graziano, the most vociferously anti-Jewish of all the characters, launches a verbal assault against Shylock, which includes this passage: Thy currish spirit governed a wolf [possibly a pun on the physician's name] who, hanged for human slaughter, even from the gallows did his fell soul fleet....

The trial created such a sensation throughout London and beyond that at least five accounts were published while it was occurring. One of the reasons that Marlowe's play was a huge theatrical hit was the

concurrence of the Lopez affair, which created a tremendous amount of excitement throughout London and beyond. It was one of the hottest items in the news at the time, also prompting an emergence of all the typically bigoted attitudes and stereotypical images of the Jew in spite of, or because of, their absence for three centuries. Marlowe's play fed anti-Jewish hysteria and intensified Jew-baiting that prompted audiences to laugh heartily at Barabas, the incarnation of evil. It was performed at least fifteen times during the period of the trial.

There is speculation that the play stimulated Shakespeare to write *The Merchant of Venice* in response to the Lopez affair, to the fury it unleashed among the English, and to the great popularity that it caused for Marlowe's play. Shakespeare's title, furthermore, corresponds to the rhythm of Marlowe's title, indicating the possibility that the *Merchant* was a direct response to Marlowe's play. But instead of the Jew Shylock being used in the title, Shakespeare used the Christian Antonio. It is speculative, of course, but this permutation may be a hint that Christian and Jew are not that different (Which is the merchant here, and which the Jew?) However, no other play refers in the title to the occupation of a character only Antonio the merchant. It is possible that Shakespeare is trying to move his audiences and readers away from thinking in terms of the medieval, money-related stereotypes of the Jew and sensitizing them to the new, developing world of capitalism in which the Christian merchant (alias capitalist or venture capitalist) is a growing reality, a reality that cannot be extricated from borrowing money, creating capital, compounding interest, and producing profits.

Rather than calling it the Christian of Venice, Shakespeare concentrates on the inseparable identity of the Christian Antonio with the expanding world of mercantilism. No longer must incipient capitalism be identified with the stereotyped Jew; no longer is usury a vocation that belongs to the Jew alone. And those who continue to imprecate the Jew as usurious are guilty of blatant hypocrisy. Venice is the quintessence of this new wealth-producing, money-conscious universe. The opulence of Belmont would be impossible without Venice where wealth breeds more wealth. The Christians of Venice and Belmont unceasingly

produce a vocabulary related to the making and the existential value of capital. Even their loves, affections, and religious sentiments cannot be separated from the delectation of currency.

Stereotypes and myths are being punctured relentlessly by Shakespeare the kinds of bigoted generalizations fabricated by Marlowe's most recent success in the London theater, some of that success adventitiously stemming from the Lopez scandal.

In Marlowe's play, the Governor of Malta seizes the Jew Barabas's house and turns it into a nunnery. Barabas is furious and wants revenge on the governor by eventually killing the governor's son Ludovick and Ludovick's best friend Mathias.

Barabas's wealth is also hidden in the house: all his gold, pearls, and jewels. He plots with Abigail, his daughter, to become a nun so she can secure his gold which is hidden in a secret place in the house, under a floor marked by a cross. His daughter dutifully obeys her father.

Mathias is in love with Abigail, and she reciprocates his love. He tells his friend Ludovick how beautiful she is. Abigail decides to leave the nunnery and move into her father's new mansion.

Barabas sees an opportunity for vengeance and conceives a plot to make the two men so jealous of each other that they will duel to the death. Barabas also purchases a slave, Ithamore, to help him in his plot (which reminds us of what Shylock says to the Christians about slavery).

Barabas has sworn to frustrate both their hopes [Ludovick and Mathias] and be revenged upon the Governor. He tells each of the men that the other is wooing Abigail, but Barabas also told Abigail to seduce Ludovick, and again she dutifully obeys her father.

Mathias sees them holding hands, and Barabas tells him that Ludovick has sworn his death. Barabas sets them both at enmity. Indeed, they both duel and kill each other. Ithamore says: Why was there ever seen such villainy, so neatly plotted and so well performed? Ithamore

informs Abigail and tells her that her father arranged the plot.

Abigail then confronts Barabas: Hard-hearted father, unkind Barabas, was this the pursuit of thy policy, to make me show them favor severally, that by my favor they should both be slain? Admit thou lovedst not Ludovick for his sire, yet Don Mathias ne'er offended thee. She decides to really become a nun this time to escape from her father after he kills both her suitors. Barabas understands the reason for her decision. But he decides to kill her also by plotting with Ithamore to get poison into the food that all the nuns eat.

They all die expeditiously, except Abigail who dies more slowly than the others, probably because she has a few more things to say such as her dying words spoken to Friar Bernardine: Ah, gentle friar, convert my father that he may be saved, and witness that I die a Christian. The friar says: Ay, and a virgin, too, that grieves me most.

Ithamore informs Barabas of Abigail's death and says to him: Do you not sorrow for your daughter's death? Barabas replies: No, but I grieve because she lived so long....

So *The Merchant of Venice* was created against the background of a long historical record of hatred for Jews and injustices done to them, most dramatically reflected in Shakespeare's own time by two events: the trial of Lopez and the production of Marlowe's play.

Abigail and Jessica

Jessica, however, is radically different from Abigail. What are some of the differences between the two daughters? Abigail recognizes the villainous character of Barabas only when he kills her Christian lover; only then does she convert and become a nun. But Jessica displays her hostile feelings for her father from the beginning and with no specific cause.

Shylock trusts her to lock up the house when he leaves to avoid thieves. Instead, encouraged by her boyfriend Lorenzo, she steals her father's money and jewels and still goes back for more.

Jessica apostatizes herself by forsaking her Jewish heritage, and Lorenzo hadn't even asked her to do so. The first symbol of apostasy is cross-dressing. ...Cupid himself would blush to see me thus transformed to a boy. (2.6.36f) a violation of Deuteronomy 22.5: A woman must not put on mans apparel, nor shall a man wear woman's clothing; for whoever does these things is abhorrent to the Lord your God. With unintentional wisdom, Gratiano looks at her and says: Now (by my hood) a gentle and no Jew. (2.6.52) gentle being used frequently throughout the play for Gentile.

The words Jessica chooses to explain the reason for her feeling of shame is significant as a *double entendre*:

I am glad tis night, you do not look on me,

For I am much ashamed of my *exchange*. (2.6.34f)

Not only could this refer to the exchange of clothing but also the more serious exchange of Judaism for Christianity, of loyalty for betrayal.

She and Lorenzo go to Genoa where they deplete all their contraband in a spending spree. In fact, they go so far as to trade her mother's ring, which has great sentimental value to Shylock, for a monkey. Later, we catch her lying to Portia about her fathers longstanding intentions to take Antonios life (3.2.286f)

Morris Carnovsky, who acted the role of Shylock, said that she is an apostate, really a little bitch, who willingly changes her religion to have a good time. (Quoted in Barnet 1970, p. 8) Shakespeare has patently included unsightly colors in his character portrait of Jessica, unlike the portraits of Silvayns Cornelia and Marlowe's Abigail.

Barabas and Shylock

And how is Shylock different from Barabas?

First of all, Barabas is a natural development from all the mystery and miracles plays of the Middle Ages, and the stereotypical myths that

emerged during the period of the Crusades, in which the Jew was an undiluted villain associated with all the heinous charges made against him like poisoning wells and using Christian blood to make matzahs. Barabas is a natural Machiavel (a word that Marlowe actually uses). He is a murderer, and kills his own daughter as well as her suitor. In Florence, he learned how to deceive and accomplish anything else that may realize his purposes. Florence was the home of Machiavelli.

In *The Jew of Malta*, it is Barabas who is the wealthy merchant, like Antonio. He trades in Florence, Venice, Antwerp, London, Seville, Frankfort, Lubeck, Moscow and other places. He also is a member of a fraternity of Jewish magnates whose commercial power is spread throughout Greece, Malta, Italy, and France all wealthier far than any Christian. Already, this early, we see Werner Sombart's thesis: the Jew as the driving force of modern capitalism. (Gross 1992, p. 22) Shakespeare transposes the Jewish source of wealth from a Jew to a Christian, Antonio being far wealthier than Shylock. We can only speculate about the reasons for this alteration.

We learn of Shylock as a complex human being with understandable motives. He is the first Jew in the history of theater who is a real human being with real human traits. Lawrence Danson wrote: With just the fewest words, Shakespeare has created a biography for his character... (1978, p. 136) More importantly, he gave Shylock a sense of dignity, and a degree of persuasiveness. In the Jacob-Laban story, Shakespeare gave Shylock's argument a chance to win the debate with Antonio. In addition, the dialogue itself between Shylock and Antonio is completely original. Barabas has no such counterpart as Shylock does.

Barabas says: The tribe that I descended of was all in general cast away for sin.

Similar and yet quite dissimilar are Shylock's words: Sufferance is the badge of all our tribe. (1.3.105) Marlowe interprets the Jewish dispersion as a consequence of collective iniquity. Shakespeare deletes this

interpretation and simply but profoundly reflects, through Shylock, on the Jewish people's power to endure and survive. A major difference: in the first, the Jews could well deserve any disaster that happens to them; the second is an objective reality with a tinge of sympathy. Granted, Shakespeare's Shylock is unsavory just as Marlowe's Barabas is. But, as we have already seen, one of Shakespeare's original inventions is to portray every character with unattractive traits.

During this same period many aliens were settling in London by now an influential trade center and great European capital because of economic opportunities. After the accession of Elizabeth to the throne, there was a period of significant economic expansion. Elizabeth's accession after Mary also meant the overthrow of Catholicism, giving more encouragement to New Christians of Spanish and Portuguese origin to settle in England . At the beginning of her reign there were about 3,000 aliens in England . By the end of her reign, the number had grown to 10,000. Because of this growth, a great deal of anti-alien sentiment developed among the masses. The Italian historian, Petrucio Ubaldini, commented on this: It is easier to find flocks of white crows than one Englishman (and let him believe what he will about religion) who loves a foreigner. Anti-alien riots took place in 1588, 1593, and 1595.

Every Jew who came to England was classified as an alien, a small part of thousands of immigrants since London, known as the dining-room of Christendom, was one of the most influential centers of international trade.

Portia refers to Shylock as an alien (4.1.345) which, incidentally, indicates yet another contradiction since she also told him earlier that the Venetian law cannot impugn you as you do proceed. (4.1.174) There is a different justice for the alien, the outsider, in spite of Leviticus 9.33-34: When an alien lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him. The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt . Was this biblical precept unknown in Christian Venice or England ? Shylock lives his

entire life, not just his hours in court, as an alien. Wherever he goes, whatever he does, others treat him this way. He lives in an alien world, facing the alienation of Venetian (a.k.a. English) citizens. His life is merely tolerable only because he can at least engage in his business of money-lending, which chose him more than he chose the vocation itself because, like Jews throughout Europe, he was not permitted to engage in many other kinds of business. In the feudal economy, he was prevented from entering all guild organizations, from owning land, from engaging in any of the normal occupations. Because of unexpected expulsions and other forms of persecution, he had to be ready to leave his home at a moments notice. So investing in money, jewelry, and pawn broking was practical, even necessary, because it was portable.

According to James Shapiro, one thing aliens had in common was a disability: they were not allowed to be citizens. Competition with these foreigners was a source of agitation to native Londoners who were concerned about their own financial situation. Anti-alien sentiment was growing and led to riots throughout London.

Shylock the alien, who could be convicted in a court of law as a threatening alien, has to be understood in the context of these socio-economic tensions characterizing the mid-1590s.

What Shylock the Alien Says about Antonio

Shylock: I hate him for he is a Christian. (1.3.37) This churlish remark could refer to any of the following:

- * The grudge between Christians and Jews is ancient, initiated by Christians in the New Testament.
- * Christians have no tolerance for non-Christians in this society.
- * Christians have been trying to avenge the death of Jesus by punishing Jews for hundreds of years [See the Hath not a Jew speech with regard to revenge] Since New Testament times, Jews have been accused of deicide. Throughout the centuries, Jewish-Christian polemics

were accompanied by physical violence as well as slander equating the Jewish people with Cain, with Judas, a murderous people of the worst kind: God-murderers. The Christian response of violence, verbal and physical, is the result of the Jews tormenting Jesus, of insulting and mocking him, of nailing him to the cross all the sole responsibility of the Jewish people.

Although I am trying to discipline myself to refer to the evidence of an adversarial relationship between Jews and Christians and the Christian oppression of Jews prior to the time of Shakespeare so that we may consider only what he may have known, I want to include one chronological exception. The exception demonstrates how deep-rooted the charge of deicide is. In the novel *Black Boy* by the African-American author Richard Wright, we read this passage: All of us black people who lived in the neighborhood hated Jews, not because they exploited us, but because we had been taught at home and in Sunday School that Jews were Christ killers.

* Shylock hates Antonio because Antonio hates our sacred nation.

Shylock considers reciprocal hate to be a moral responsibility: Cursed be my tribe if I forgive him. (1.3.48f)

* He brings down interest rates in Venice, thereby threatening Shylock's business interests.

* He insults and embarrasses Shylock publicly with regard to his business (which Antonio also does, speaking about Shylock while standing in his presence, to Bassanio the same kind of deprecating treatment in public).

* He torments Shylock with a variety of invectives and abuses him physically as well (misbeliever...cut-throat dog, spitting on his Jewish clothing....kicking him like a dog), all of which provokes Shylock to respond:

O father Abram, what these Christians are Whose own hard dealings teaches them Suspect the thoughts of others! (1.3.156f)

What Citizen Antonio Says about Shylock

Antonio responds to Shylock's offer to forego all interest payments for a loan to him:

* Hie thee, gentle Jew.

The Hebrew will turn Christian, he grows kind. (1.3.174f)

No Jews can be kind; if he is kind, then he must not be Jewish.

* The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose. (1.3.98f)

The statement is based on Luke 4. When Jesus was in the wilderness for 40 days, the devil tempted him and brought him to the pinnacle of the Jerusalem temple. The devil then said to him: If you are the son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written: He will give his angels charge of you, to guard you, and On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone [The devil is quoting Psalm 91.11-12].

* Antonio judges his inward character -- a goodly apple rotten at the heart....what a goodly outside falsehood hath! (1.3.96f) although he hardly knows Shylock.

* He says that he will not stop calling Shylock a dog, spitting on him and spurning him in spite of the loan and in spite of offering it interest-free.

* He wants Shylock to lend him money as an enemy, not as a friend, perhaps recalling Deuteronomy 23.19-20, although Shylock wants his friendship by lending him the money without interest.

* Antonio is the first one to suggest a penalty (1.3.132), evidently saying it with an outburst of anger.

The Golden Fleece

In the remarkable and original dialogue between Shylock and Antonio on the biblical story of Jacob and Laban, Shylock the Jew and Antonio

the Christian argue about the legitimacy and justification of their respective ways of earning a livelihood, but they do so by using a biblical text which is part of their common religious heritage: the Hebrew Bible. We shall examine this more closely later.

Shylock and Antonio also show themselves to be twin aspects of an economically driven society arguing over one form of business being right and another being wrong when the objective of both men is the augmentation of their personal profit and gain.

An essential element in their business ventures is the unfailing reliability of protective and supportive legislation, as Antonio says:

The duke cannot deny the course of law:

For the commodity that strangers have

With us in Venice, if it be denied,

Will much impeach the justice of the state,

Since that the trade and profit of the city

Consisteth of all nations.... (3.4.26f)

The law of contracts is sacred and must be kept, just as Shylock must keep his own heavenly oath. (...by our holy Sabbath have I sworn 4.1.36f)

The biblical dialogue also represents a changing and dislocating transition from feudalism to capitalism, a time when an agrarian economy was changing to a new order of mercantilism. At this point, we must see the implications of those passages in the play that bear on economic issues.

The sheer frequency of remarks about money, profit, business ventures, and many other financial allusions must indicate the central importance of commerce throughout the play. First, the setting itself: Venice is a commercial republic. As we have seen, laws must be kept,

if not for the sake of justice itself, then because of international trade. Commerce seems to be more important in reality than Christian values. Even love and marriage involve a commercial alliance, so that religious values are hard to differentiate from economic values.

In fact, it is Shylock's money that makes the union between Bassanio and Portia possible. When we meet Shylock, his first words are about money, only because that is the role he performs when Bassanio is seeking a loan, needed, of course, because Bassanio is a reckless spendthrift. Shylock's immediate definition is functional and fiscal, just as it was this functional role that defined the Jew throughout the medieval period and beyond. He only appears because he serves a function for the Christians Bassanio and Antonio. If Bassanio had not wasted his best friend's wealth, there would never have been a Shylock. Although he remains an alien, ostracized by others, including his own servant, his value is strictly utilitarian and dependent on the needs of non-Jews.

Both Bassanio and Portia speak of their love for each other in commercial terms.

Bassanio says to Antonio:

I have a mind presages me such thrift

That I should question less be fortunate. (1.1.175f)

And Portia says to Bassanio:

You see me Lord Bassanio where I stand,

Such as I am; though for myself alone

I would not be ambitious in my wish

To wish myself much better, yet for you,

I would be trebled twenty times myself,

A thousand times more fair, ten thousand times

more rich,

That only to stand high in your account,

I might in virtues, beauties, livings, friends

Exceed account: but the full sum of me

Is sum of something: which to term in gross,

Is an unlesson'd girl.... (3.2.149f)

The pecuniary nature of Portia's love is expressed succinctly but pungently when she learns that Shylock is going to enforce the penalty of his bond. She tells Bassanio that she can give as much money as it takes, and then more, to help his friend, implying that her love for Bassanio has become expensive: Since you are dear bought, I will love you dear (3.2.313), an expression similar to one used by Shylock when referring to the acquisition of slaves. (4.1.90)

Note also the striking parallel between what Shylock says and then what Antonio says later about the similarity between life and earning a living:

Shylock says in the trial:

You take my house, when you do take the prop

That doth sustain my house: you take my life

When you do take the means whereby I live. (4.1.371f)

This remark is similar to a verse in Ecclesiasticus 34.22: He who takes away his neighbors living kills him.

After Portia tells the brooding Antonio that his ships are safe after all, he replies:

Sweet lady, you have given me life and living;

For here I read for certain that my ships

Are safely come to road. (5.1.268f)

Both Shylock and Antonio make their living because of the far-reaching transition occurring in the dynamic, possibly bewildering, movements from feudalism to capitalism, the merchant no less than the money-lender. Antonio has his divers creditors and merchandise. The ventures of both men are unrelated to wealth derived from the more traditional expressions of land and lineage. Shylock's objective is to produce (breed) pecuniary wealth. Antonio's objective is to produce merchandising wealth through ships richly come to harbor.

Indeed, profit-making is Antonio's *raison d'être* as a merchant in a world becoming profoundly different from the world of feudalism and manorialism. As Kiernan Ryan informs us, the basic objective of the feudal system was to reproduce the existing conditions of production, to preserve traditional economic and social relations and the ideological framework that guaranteed them. But [the developing mode of capitalism demands] the ceaseless generation of surplus value. (1995, p. 27) Antonio's financial goal is surplus value from the various commodities (perhaps even slaves among others) that he buys throughout the world. He will then sell these commodities at a richly higher price in order to generate great wealth for himself. Should he require capital to purchase ships, supply them with all the necessities of transportation and acquisition, pay the salaries of the many workmen required for a vast argosy on the seven seas, bargain with the merchants and other natives at the various ports of call throughout the world, it may be necessary for him to borrow money, especially if he plans for his capital to grow and produce ever-increasing surplus which is the obvious objective of the merchant, and a necessity because of competition. In this new world, the commercially ambitious merchant enters a business partnership with the money-lender (later to be known as banker) so that he can acquire more capital for the production of more surplus. Since the banker thereby produces more value as well, both financial ventures (the surplus producer and the currency producer) have entered into a partnership of mutual usefulness, advantage, and prosperity, a relationship in which affection and friendship are irrele-

vant. Shylock makes his money breed quickly, and Antonio makes his surplus value grow lucratively. Speaking for Shylock, Goddard says, Look a bit closer, Antonio, and you will see that your profits amount to the same thing as my interest. We are in the same boat. (1951, p. 90)

There is also a financial parallel between Shylock and Bassanio. When Shylock realizes that his daughter has betrayed him, married Lorenzo, converted to Christianity, and stolen his money, he refers to both his ducats and daughter as if there is no difference between the value of each. However, this alleged remark is hearsay anyway, coming from that inveterate rumormonger Solanio. (2.8.15f) Worried about his money concurrently with concern for his daughter has often been a reason given for interpreting the play as anti-Semitic. But directly from the horse's mouth, Bassanio considers marriage to Portia as a way to get clear of all the debts I owe, (1.1.135) and then refers to her material wealth before mentioning any of her other attributes; even her sunny locks remind him of the golden fleece:

In Belmont is a lady richly left,
And she is fair, and (fairer than the word),
Of wondrous virtues....
...her sunny locks
Hang on her temples like a golden fleece....
And many Jason's come in quest of her.... (1.1.169f)

Bassanio doesn't hesitate to say that Portia's wealth is necessary for his happiness.

Shakespeare uses the word prodigal more frequently in this play than in any other:

1. Bassanio is called prodigal by Shylock and by himself:
2. Bassanio says: My chief care is to come fairly off from the great debts wherein my time something too prodigal hath left me gag'd. (1.1.127-130)

3. Shylock says: Ill go in hate, to feed upon the prodigal Christian.
(2.5.15-16)

4. And about Antonio, he says: A bankrupt, a prodigal, who dare scarce show his head on the Rialto. (3.1.41-42)

Shylock is only tolerated in Venetian society because of his economic usefulness; in all other areas of human association, he is shunned as an outsider, a Jew.

Salerio refers to Antonio's business anxieties; a holy edifice reminds him of dangerous rocks that threaten Antonio's ships (1.1.29ff.) a metaphor in which commerce seems to take the place of Christianity.

Money is the touchstone of the entire play from beginning to end with caskets, profit, prodigality, usury, merchandising, rings, mansions, and opulent suburbs.

Nor can the Duke deny the course of law primarily because of trade and profit. Venice exists on the basis of economic contracts. That's what makes it Venice. It is nothing if not a profit-based society.

When Jessica is in the act of stealing her father's money, Gratiano says that she is a Gentile, not a Jew. Speaking for himself and Bassanio, he also says: We are the Jasons, we have won the Fleece. (3.2.240) In fact, Jason and the golden fleece are referred to three times in the play: here, then by Bassanio when referring to Portia and her wealth, then by Jessica when rhapsodizing with Lorenzo.

When the two couples Gratiano-Nerissa and Bassanio-Portia decide to share their wedding celebration, Gratiano wants to bet 1,000 ducats that he and his wife will have a baby boy before the other couple. Well play with them the first boy for a thousand ducats. (3.2.213) Their first child's gender becomes a financial speculation, another commodity.

Lancelot Gobbo complains that too many Jewish converts to Christianity will raise the price of pork.

There are inextricable entanglements between love and money throughout the play. Bassanio needs money to marry Portia, but they love each other. Antonio would not have gotten himself into so much trouble if he had only treated Shylock with civility and if he had not borrowed the money because of his seemingly exorbitant love for Bassanio.

Nor would the romantic ambiance of Belmont be possible without the money made in Venice to afford an affluent suburb. The commercial success of Venice becomes the means for the realization of Belmont. The wealth of Belmont is also excessive, which may be what Nerissa is alluding to when she says that happiness is seated in the mean. (1.2.6) Her advice to Portia is taken from Aristotle's idea of the golden mean as the only way to genuine happiness neither deprivation nor excess, but living a life of moderation.

Jessica steals all her father's money and jewels to forge her marriage with Lorenzo, but she doesn't trust his loyalty anyway. (2.6.26f) Not being satisfied, she even returns for more loot. (2.6.49f) Money is coupled with every love affair, and beyond. Salerio tries to cheer Antonio by relating church attendance to profit-making (1.1.29f)

Elizabethan England is poised between a medieval society where wealth was based on land and a capitalistic structure in which wealth could be condensed into coins, gems, and instruments of debt. In addition, all financial dealings have to be backed up with notes of obligations and with contracts; in other words, with bonds, a key word in the play. Its not only the bond that Shylock insists on being honored, but the bond of Portia's father's will is no less legalistic than the bond between Shylock and Antonio; the ring bond is no less legalistic than the flesh bond as Portia interprets it; and Jessica asks Lorenzo for a bond: If you keep promise, I shall end this strife.(2.3.16f.) a big if! Evidently Jessica has laid down the details of their bond, as Lorenzo intimates to Gratiano:

I must needs tell thee all, she hath directed

How I shall take her from her father's house,
What gold and jewels she is furnishd with,
What pages suit she hath in readiness.... (2.4.29f)

Portia doesn't seem to understand that there is a higher loyalty connected with the ring-bond made with Bassanio, and that is to use the ring to express his love for another human being, Antonio, who was willing to lose his life for Bassanio. Portia's attitude toward the ring is similar to a strict, fundamentalist, literal justice, revealing a tension between different levels of loyalty and obligation. (4.1.444f and 5.1.166f) But how can mercy be applied in a court of law where bonds and contracts must be upheld? One can devalue human dignity by dissolving the bonds in society that guarantee social dignity.

Bassanio, however, has a limited understanding of the weight of contractual obligation when he says to the Duke: ...I beseech you wrest once the law to your authority, to do a great right, do a little wrong. (4.1.212) Since contractual law must always be honored, how can you possibly use the idea of either arbitrary authority or gentle mercy in society?

References:

Barnet, Sylvan (ed.), *Twentieth Century Interpretations of The Merchant of Venice: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1970).

Baudel, Fernand, *Civilization and Capitalism: 15th-18th Centuries*, trans. Sian Reynolds, 3 volumes. (1985)

Danson, Lawrence, *The Harmonies of The Merchant of Venice* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1978).

Goddard, Harold C., *The Meaning of Shakespeare, Volume 1* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1951).

Gross, John, *Shylock: A Legend & Its Legacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992).

Hyamson, A.M., *A History of the Jews in England* (London: Chatto & Windus. 1908).

Roth, Cecil, *A History of the Jews in England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978)

Ryan, Kiernan. *Shakespeare* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1995).

Shapiro, James, *Shakespeare and the Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press. 1996)

Spencer, Christopher, *The Genesis of Shakespeares Merchant of Venice* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press. 1988).

The final installment will be printed in the next issue of *Menorah Review*.

Two Poems

By Richard E. Sherwin

The Cost of Joy

If it hurts to live on the razor's edge
you may as well dance

If your legs get shredded on the razor's edge
you may as well sing

If you hemorrhage song on the razor's edge
pray it and praise

If you lose your world on the razor's edge
you may as well dance

And sing because your soul's not dead
on the razor's edge

The Only Song ...

No doubt about it.

Gds in love. With the Jews. Still.

Go figure it out.

Flaming swords and cherubim.

Molten calves. Still. In love. Them.

What've they to do

Before He gives up the ghost.

His. Theirs. Loves. Exiles

Nor returns change anything.

What kind of knowing is this.
Crazy and whats worse
They're just as mad about Him.
Still. Go figure it out. Fires
Furnaces and promises
Deferred in clouds of ashes.
Wandering the streets
Of time. Bloody from cops lead
capas and postgodly
sophists bedevilings. Still.
Gd seeks. They seek. And they find

