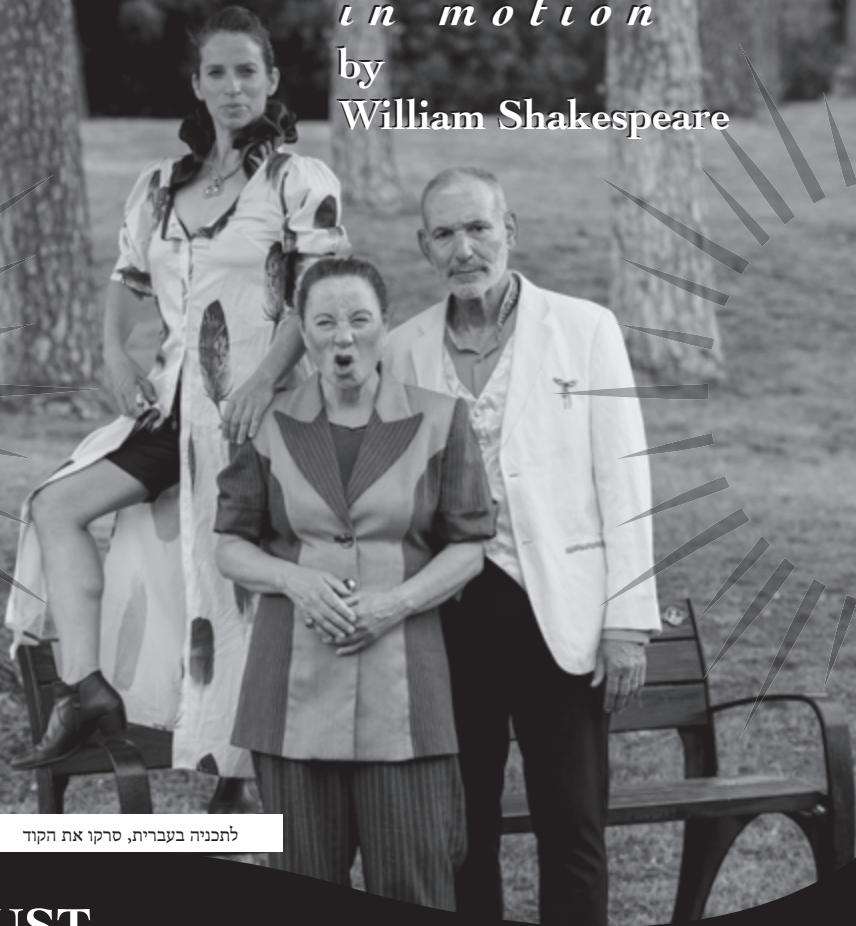


THE MERCHANT OF VENICE:

in motion

by

William Shakespeare



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AUGUST

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**“I am a Jew”:
What did Shakespeare really
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**“Scripture for Their Purpose”:
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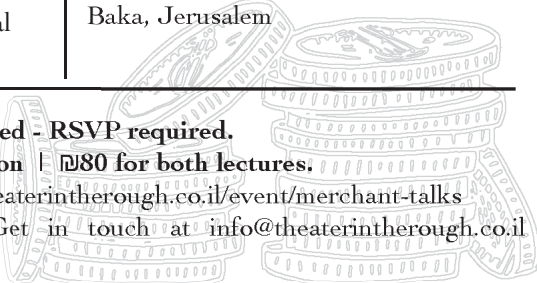
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This production has been made possible by a grant from the Nathan Cummings Foundation, with the encouraging support of Ruth Cummings. Special thanks to TiTR partner, Linda Adams.



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DIRECTOR'S NOTE



The Merchant of Venice? It's the show that keeps on giving. Every night, we pulled and tugged at it in rehearsal, discussing anything from the plight of Jews in Venice in the Middle Ages to Christian theology, to whether Shakespeare ever knew any Jews, along with anti-semitism as a modern day ideology.

We've focused on developing this fabulous cast of not-so-likeable characters, from Portia the less than merciful to Shylock, the not-such-a-balatisher mensch and his runaway daughter Jessica, to the successful but tortured businessman, Antonio and his merchant friends. During our rehearsal process, we watched as the play's story unfolded, exposing Antonio and Shylock's hatred of the "other," along with their surprising similarities.

We wondered why Jessica runs away with Lorenzo the Christian, betraying not only her community but her father, from whom she steals money and jewels. Just like Portia's escape from her home in Belmont to masquerade as a male lawyer in the court where Shylock's and Antonio's fates are decided, each of these women yearns (and tries) to redirect her life beyond what their fathers wanted for them.

In spite of the standard comedy ending - nobody dies, and people get married - Shakespeare leaves us hanging. What will happen to Antonio and does Shylock convert as required and...become a merchant? After the show, tell me what you think these characters' paths forward in life might be.

Enjoy the performance and thank you so much for coming!

Beth Steinberg

Artistic Director, Theater in the Rough

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Yam Drori & Beth Steinberg



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Live Music	Yaar Drori
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Costume Manager	Gabrielle Vigodny
Caskets	Sara Levene
Stage Manager	Tzviya Fawn Brickel
Production Team	Yael Berg, Alana Amelan, Eitan Berg, Eden Berg, Ira Skop, Gabrielle Vigodny, Alexa Myers, Amit Bergman
Script Adaptation	Ira Skop, Beth Steinberg, Miriam Metzinger, Omer Shaik, Annabelle Landgarten
Graphic Design	Hillary Menkowitz
Photos	Yitz Woolf, Michael Sager, Merav Blum, Will
Video	Barak Bard

*Special thanks to **Reuven Laitoosh** for coordination help.*

Music adapted from Belle Qui Tiens Ma Vie by Thoinot Arbeau, 1599.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Argosies - large merchant ships.

Belmont - a fictional place in rural Italy, means 'beautiful mountain'.

Usury - lending money at an interest.

Usance - the period of the loan, which would determine how much interest would be paid on it.

Bond - in the play, the document that lays out the terms of Shylock's loan to Antonio.

Forfeiture - in the play, the "pound of flesh" that Antonio must surrender to Shylock if he cannot repay the loan in time.

Glisters - frequently misquoted as "glitters", as in "All that glitters is not gold."

On the Rialto - refers to news heard among the traders who gather on the Rialto bridge and district.

The narrow seas-the Goodwins - the Goodwins Sands, near the mouth of the Thames, a place where many ships are wrecked in the shallows.

Slubber - to do something hastily.

Doctor - in the play, a lawyer.

Principal - the initial payment of a loan that gains interest over time.

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PLOT AND PERSPECTIVE

By Yam Drori. Adapted from Stephen Greenblatt on the Shakespeare for All podcast.

For more than 400 years, the figure of the Jewish moneylender Shylock has fascinated actors, audiences, readers, and researchers alike. Is he a monstrous antisemitic stereotype? A long-suffering humanist anti-hero? Or maybe both?

However, despite the large shadow he casts, he is not the merchant of the play's title, which refers to Antonio, a melancholy Christian with a tendency to self-sacrificial generosity.

"In sooth, I know not why I am so sad," says Antonio in the opening lines of the play. His companions, Salerio and Solanio, try to discover the mystery of his sorrow, when, as if on cue; enter Bassanio.

Bassanio is heavily in debt. To mend his fortunes, he seeks the hand and wealth of a beautiful heiress, Portia. Although he already owes Antonio money, he asks for more (just this last time), in order to properly outfit himself for the journey to Belmont to win Portia. Antonio, who appears to have a unique and powerful desire to gratify Bassanio, says yes, assuring him "My purse, my person, my extremest means lie all unlocked to your occasions."

There's just one problem. With his money currently invested in ships at sea, Antonio needs to borrow money. And so, he turns to Shylock.

Thus, the Christian and the Jew who share a vitriolic hate towards one another find themselves as business partners. Shylock offers to lend the money interest-free, with only a "merry sport" as a condition. If Antonio cannot repay the loan on time, he will forfeit a pound of his flesh. Antonio agrees.

Meanwhile, in Belmont, Portia is also melancholy. She is locked into the fantastical conditions of her father's will, which stipulate that she cannot choose whom to wed. The choice depends on a test out of a fairytale. Her portrait is locked in one of three caskets of gold, silver, and lead. Any suitor who wishes to marry her must correctly guess in which casket her portrait lies. The stakes are high; if a suitor guesses wrongly, he must swear never to marry.

Back in Venice, another daughter is unhappy at her father's attempts to control her. Jessica, Shylock's daughter, has secretly been in a relationship with a Christian named Lorenzo. While Shylock is away, Jessica elopes with Lorenzo, availing herself of her father's gold and jewels.

A distraught Shylock hears from a Jewish friend, Tubal, that Jessica has been spending his wealth around Italy. Tubal also tells him that Antonio's ships have been lost at sea – he won't be able to repay his bond.

Is it just now, after his daughter's flight, that the decision to exact the "pound of flesh" occurs to Shylock? Or did he intend to trick Antonio all along, in revenge for countless years of humiliation and financial comeuppance?

Over in Belmont, Bassanio chooses the lead casket, the right one. Portia joyfully pledges herself and all her wealth to Bassanio. She also gives him a ring, which he promises never to part with. Bassanio's friend, Gratiano, and Portia's maidservant, Nerissa, announce their plan to marry as well.

Lorenzo and Jessica arrive, along with a letter from Antonio. He writes that he cannot repay the debt, and that Shylock plans to take his "pound of flesh," which will likely end Antonio's life. Portia gives the frantic Bassanio gold to repay the bond, urging him to go save his friend.

In the Venetian court, Shylock and Antonio come before the Duke. The Duke cannot invalidate Shylock's contract without going against the equal right of civil law for all citizens of the city, Jews and Christians.

Just in time, a young lawyer named Balthazar and his clerk arrive to help try the case. Although nobody realizes it, it is none other than Portia and Nerissa, disguised as men. But Shylock refuses to be merciful or take thrice the money he is owed, offered to him by Bassanio.

As Shylock approaches Antonio, knife in hand, Portia suddenly stops him. "This bond doth give thee here no jot of blood," she says, "Shed thou no blood, nor cut thou less nor more but just a pound of flesh."

With this, the case changes from civil to criminal, where there is a difference between Christian citizens and Jewish non-citizens. Shylock's penalty for threatening to harm Antonio is severe. He will lose all of his property to the state, and his own life is forfeit. The Duke agrees to let Shylock live, if he obeys the conditions that Antonio names; that he leave his estate to Jessica and Lorenzo, and that he convert to Christianity.

Bassanio asks the still-disguised Portia to repay her for her legal prowess. When she asks for his ring, he reluctantly gives it away.

Everyone returns to Belmont, where Bassanio confesses that he no longer has the ring. He asks Portia to forgive him, and swears he will never again break a promise to her. She returns the ring to him, and reveals that she was the lawyer that saved the day. She also shares the news that Antonio's ships have arrived home with riches, and Lorenzo and Jessica learn that they will inherit Shylock's wealth.

The strands of the plot are happily tied up, but the end is staggeringly unsatisfying, with the absent figure of Shylock looming in our minds, and Antonio's initial melancholy unexplained and unresolved.

The Merchant of Venice is one of the most uncomfortable and troubling of all of Shakespeare's works. It grapples with a central, tormenting, intractable problem in Western culture: the relation of Jews and Christians. It digs deep into the fears and fantasies that have motivated centuries of persecution.

Ultimately, it is our role to grapple with these imperfect characters, without justifying or excusing their actions. What does it mean to come to terms with The Merchant of Venice?

VENICE

SHYLOCK

a wealthy moneylender,
Jessica's father
Annabelle Landgarten

JESSICA

in love with Lorenzo,
Shylock's Daughter
Elisbeva Greenberg

SALERIO

Chaita Ziporab Nicbolls Zucker



JEWS



CHRISTIAN

TUBAL

another wealthy
moneylender
Andrea Katz

SOLANIO

Andrea Katz

ANTONIO

Yehoshua Looks

BASSANIO
Natan Skop

LORENZO
in love with Jessica
Omer Shaik

The DUKE

ruler of the city, presides over the court
Chiaia Zipporah Nicholls Zucker

NERRISA

Portia's maidservant,
later disguised as the
lawyer's clerk
Naomi Altschuler

BELMONT

GRATIANO
Miriam Metzinger

PORTIA
a rich heiress, later
disguised as Balthazar,
the lawyer.
Maya Blank



MONETARY AMOUNTS

A ducat was a gold coin used as currency in early modern Venice, and much of Europe. By some accounts, the value of one ducat today would be worth about \$120, or about ₪450.

Therefore, the amount of money Jessica allegedly spends in Genoa is about \$9,500, or ₪33,200.

The bond between Antonio and Shylock is worth about \$360,000, or ₪1,240,000, quite a lot of money for Bassanio to go wooing Portia in Belmont.

Portia's offer to Bassanio, when she sends him off to save Antonio and pay the bond is a lot of money "Pay him six thousand and deface the bond. Double six thousand, and then treble that!" At face value, it means she has, in easily liquid form, around \$4,300,000, or ₪16,200,000, which would mean Bassanio's initial investment (to woo her) has paid off.

This last amount of money is also the amount that Shylock says he will refuse in court, "If every ducat in six thousand ducats were in six parts, and every part a ducat, I would not draw them."



QUESTIONS FOR FAMILIES TO ASK WHEN YOU'RE ON THE MOVE...

If someone has been unkind, how should we react? Is it ok to be unkind in return?

If a parent thinks it is right to act a certain way, what should they do to make sure their child agrees? Is it possible to be too strict?

When should we follow the law and punish someone, and when should we be merciful and forgive them?

MYTHICAL REFERENCES

Bassanio compares Portia's hair to "a golden **fleece**, and many **Jasons** come in quest of her." In a popular tale from Greek mythology, Jason and the Argonauts set out to capture a golden fleece, which they succeed in doing with the help of Medea.


Lorenzo and Jessica compare themselves to many doomed lovers from legend, seemingly unaware of the ironic overtones.

Troilus and Cressida. Lovers during the Trojan war, they're doomed when Cressida's father defects to the Greeks, making it impossible for the relationship with the Trojan Prince Troilus to continue. Shakespeare wrote a play by this title.

Thisbe and Pyramus. These lovers, who are forbidden by their parents to communicate, elope and then after a series of misunderstandings, both commit suicide. This couple, who are one of Shakespeare's sources for Romeo and Juliet, are also played to comic effect in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Aeneas and Dido. Dido, the Queen of Carthage, falls in love with Aeneas, and is heartbroken when he abandons her, committing suicide.

Medea and Aeson. In helping Jason win the fleece, Medea brings Aeson, Jason's father, back to life as a young man, in order to trick the usurping king's daughters to kill their father, whom she does not revive.

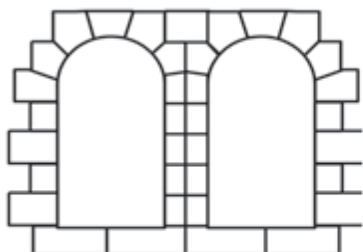


We're all born
with a certain
identity that we
don't choose.
What should we
do if we want
to change our
identity?

If you want
something, how
much should
you risk to get
wwwyou love
was in trouble,
what would
you risk to help
them?

What do you have
that you value?
What would happen
if you lost it, or it was
stolen from you?

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The
Soviet Jewry Struggle

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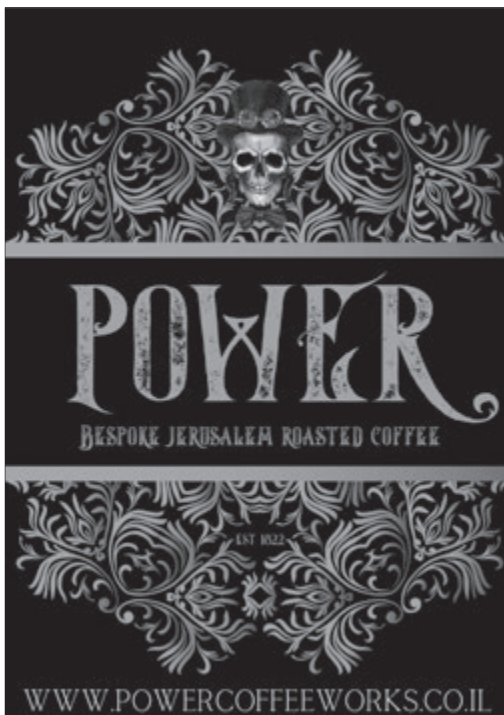
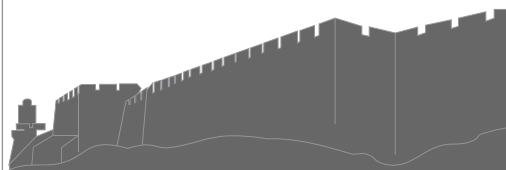
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