

DUKE

You are welcome; take your place.

Are you acquainted with the difference that holds this present question in the court?

PORTIA

I am informed thoroughly of the cause.

Which is the merchant here, and which the Jew?

DUKE

Antonio and old Shylock, both stand forth.

PORTIA

Is your name Shylock?

SHYLOCK

Shylock is my name.

PORTIA

Of a strange nature is the suit you follow,

yet in such rule\* that the Venetian law cannot impugn\* you as you do proceed.

You stand within his danger, do you not?

ANTONIO

Ay, so he says.

PORTIA

Do you confess the bond?

ANTONIO

I do.

PORTIA

Then must the Jew be merciful.

SHYLOCK

On what compulsion must I? Tell me that.

PORTIA

The quality of mercy is not strained,\* it droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven upon the place beneath.

It is twice blest; it blesseth him that gives and him that takes.

'Tis mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes the throned monarch better than his crown.

His scepter\* shows the force of temporal power, the attribute to awe and majesty,  
wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;

but mercy is above this sceptred sway; it is enthroned in the hearts of kings; it is an attribute to God himself,  
and earthly power doth then show likest God's when mercy seasons\* justice.

*rule* - proper order, *impugn* - oppose, *strained* - constrained; forced,

*scepter* - ceremonial staff held by rulers signifying royal authority, *seasons* - tempers

Therefore, Jew, though justice be thy plea, consider this:  
 that in the course of justice none of us should see salvation.  
 We do pray for mercy, and that same prayer doth teach us all to render the deeds of mercy.  
 I have spoke thus much to mitigate\* the justice of thy plea,  
 which if thou follow, this strict court of Venice must needs give sentence 'gainst the merchant there.

SHYLOCK

My deeds upon my head! I crave the law, the penalty and forfeit of my bond.

PORTIA

Is he not able to discharge the money?

BASSANIO

Yes, here I tender it for him in the court, yea, thrice the sum.  
 If that will not suffice, I will be bound to pay it ten times over on forfeit of my hands, my head, my heart.  
 I beseech you, wrest once the law to your authority.  
 To do a great right, do a little wrong, and curb this cruel devil of his will.

PORTIA

It must not be. There is no power in Venice can alter a decree established.  
 'Twill be recorded for a precedent, and many an error by the same example will rush into the state. It cannot be.

SHYLOCK

A Daniel\* come to judgment! Yea, a Daniel! O wise young judge, how I do honor thee!

PORTIA

I pray you, let me look upon the bond.

SHYLOCK

Here 'tis, most reverend Doctor, here it is.

PORTIA

Shylock, there's thrice thy money offered thee.

SHYLOCK

An oath, an oath! I have an oath in heaven; shall I lay perjury upon my soul?  
 No, not for Venice!

PORTIA

Why, this bond is forfeit; and lawfully by this the Jew may claim a pound of flesh,  
 to be by him cut off nearest the merchant's heart.  
 Be merciful. Take thrice thy money; bid me tear the bond.

SHYLOCK

When it is paid according to the tenor.  
 It doth appear you are a worthy judge; you know the law, your exposition hath been most sound.

*mitigate* - moderate, *Daniel* - the shrewd young man who exposed the elders in their false charges against Susanna in the Old Testament