***Act III Scene I***

***Analysis:***

***Synopsis:***

Shylock tells the jailer to watch out for Antonio, for Antonio will try to get him to feel sorry for him. Yet Shylock reminds Antonio of all the times he has had little sympathy for Shylock, and so now he has come to collect the debt owed to him. Antonio pleads with Shylock to listen to him, but gives up, believing that Shylock hates him for giving money to those who could not repay their debts to Shylock. Solanio tells Antonio that the Duke will never allow Shylock to take such a measure against him, but Antonio believes that the Duke will uphold the law, for if he does not, Venice will suffer. Shylock hopes that Bassanio will arrive to see him repay the debt.

Sympathy for Shylock evaporates in this scene, as we see him bent solely on revenge. Shylock takes his anger to extremes by demanding the pound of flesh from Antonio. Shylock is completely blinded to forgiveness and grace by his own rage and past humiliations. The audience is also introduced to the importance of law in Venice. While Solanio sees the Duke as a good, moral man, Antonio reminds him how important it is to keep emotions and the law separate. This distinction will play an important part in later scenes.

***Summary:***

* Solanio and Salerio meet again in the Venetian streets to gossip. Salerio sadly reports there's still a rumor out there that one of Antonio's ships has been wrecked, and he hasn't been able to find anyone to disprove it. They lament that Antonio's fortunes are poor, but they're interrupted by Shylock or, as they say, the devil in the "likeness of a Jew."
* Solanio asks Shylock for gossip from the marketplace, but Shylock points out the gossip he brings is likely old news to those two: Jessica has run off. Solanio and Salerio joke that it was about time she left the nest. As Shylock laments that his own flesh and blood has deserted him, the other two men are less than sensitive. They say Jessica was no more like Shylock than white wine to red.
* Talk turns to the fate of Antonio's ships, and Shylock whines about that too—though it's unclear whether he's gleeful or upset. Either way, he keeps reiterating that Antonio needs to "look to his bond," suggesting that he has no plans to be merciful if Antonio forfeits. Salerio scoffs that he's sure, in the case of a forfeit, that Shylock wouldn't actually want a pound of Antonio's flesh. Right?
* Shylock gives an illuminating speech on the nature of prejudice, though it's laced with vicious hatred and his desire for a pound of Antonio's flesh.
* Shylock suggests he can use Antonio's flesh as fish bait, but the most important thing the human meat will feed is Shylock's hunger for revenge. Shylock lists off the little and big cruelties to which Antonio has subjected him and points out that Antonio's reason for all this hatred is simply that Shylock is a Jew.
* He asks, in earnest, whether a Jew doesn't feel everything a Christian does, summed up by the masterful and immortalized line "If you prick us, do we not bleed?"
* Shylock's speech culminates in a note about revenge, just as it began. Jews, being wronged, will seek revenge just as Christians do. If anything, Shylock has learned this example of revenge-taking from the Christians themselves. "The villainy you teach me, I will execute," he says.
* (Psst. Check out [Al Pacino's dramatic delivery of this speech](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGXUGhIYW-4) in the 2004 film adaptation of the play.)
* A servant then enters to announce that Antonio would like to speak to Solanio and Salerio. As those two leave to see Antonio, Tubal, a Jewish friend of Shylock's, enters with his own news.
* Tubal seems to have just returned from Genoa, where he was looking for Jessica. Shylock is distraught when he learns that Tubal kept *hearing* about the girl but had no luck in actually *finding* her. However, we're not sympathetic toward Shylock for too long, as he immediately mourns not his daughter but his money. (In her flight, Jessica has stolen two thousand ducats and a ton of precious jewels.)
* Shylock wishes he could see his daughter again. Aw. Oh wait, actually, he wishes he could see her dead, laid out at his feet with all his wealth around her, which he could promptly take back again. Further, he's really peeved that this search is costing him so much, on top of the actual loss itself. Mostly, he's sad that he's getting nothing but trouble, that no one but he is feeling pain, and that his pain is everyone else's fault.
* Tubal comforts him by essentially saying, "Don't worry, other people are leading miserable lives too."
* Thankfully, Shylock doesn't feel bad for too long after he hears Tubal's news from Genoa about Antonio. Apparently, Antonio's Tripoli venture has failed, and the man is practically ruined. Shylock profusely thanks God.
* Tubal's joyous news about Antonio's failed venture (which he heard from some of the sailors who survived the wreck) is immediately tempered by bad news. In Genoa, Tubal heard that Jessica had spent eighty ducats in one night. This is big money. Tubal wisely elects to change the subject and goes back to talking about how many Venetians have come to him with the news that Antonio can't possibly pay back his debt and must break his bond with Shylock.
* It seems here that Shylock's anger and frustration at Jessica gets channeled into his already-hot hatred of Antonio. Glad for Antonio's misery, Shylock promises to plague and torture the man. Tubal seems interested in feeding the flames of Shylock's anger, as he further adds that Jessica gave away Shylock's turquoise ring (which seems to have been a gift from Shylock's absent wife) to a merchant in return for... a monkey.
* But the good news for Shylock to fall back upon is Antonio's complete and utter ruin. Shylock sends Tubal off to get an officer of the law so they can prepare for the rightful collection of Antonio's flesh at the forfeit. Shylock gloats that with Antonio out of the way, business will be better for him in Venice. After all of this hateful, vengeful talk about material goods, Shylock tells Tubal to meet him later at the synagogue.

***Critical Study:***

Salarino and Solanio discuss the rumors that yet another of [Antonio](https://www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/merchant/character/antonio/)’s ships has been wrecked. They are joined by [Shylock](https://www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/merchant/character/shylock/), who accuses them of having helped [Jessica](https://www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/merchant/character/jessica/) escape. The two Venetians proudly take credit for their role in Jessica’s elopement. Shylock curses his daughter’s rebellion, to which Salarino responds, “There is more difference between thy flesh and hers than between jet and ivory” (III.i.32–33). Salarino then asks Shylock whether he can confirm the rumors of Antonio’s lost vessels. Shylock replies that Antonio will soon be bankrupt and swears to collect his bond. Salarino doubts Shylock’s resolve, wondering what the old man will do with a pound of flesh, to which Shylock chillingly replies that Antonio’s flesh will at least feed his revenge. In a short monologue, Shylock says Antonio has mistreated him solely because Shylock is a Jew, but now Shylock is determined to apply the lessons of hatred and revenge that Christian intolerance has taught him so well.

Salarino and Solanio head off to meet with Antonio, just as Tubal, a friend of Shylock’s and a Jew, enters. Tubal announces that he cannot find Jessica. Shylock rants against his daughter, and he wishes her dead as he bemoans his losses. He is especially embittered when Tubal reports that Jessica has taken a ring—given to Shylock in his bachelor days by a woman named Leah, presumably Jessica’s mother—and has traded that ring for a monkey. Shylock’s spirits brighten, however, when Tubal reports that Antonio’s ships have run into trouble and that Antonio’s creditors are certain Antonio is ruined.

***Critical Analysis:***

In Venice, Salanio and Salarino are discussing the latest news on the Rialto, the bridge in Venice where many business offices are located. There is a rumor that a ship of Antonio's has been wrecked off the southeast coast of England. Salanio despairs twice — once because of Antonio's bad luck, and second because he sees Shylock approaching. Shylock lashes out at both men, accusing them of being accessories to Jessica's elopement. They expected as much and mock the moneylender, scoffing at his metaphor when he complains that his "flesh and blood" has rebelled. Jessica, they say, is no more like Shylock than ivory is to jet, or Rhenish wine is to red wine. Shylock then reminds the two that their friend Antonio had best "look to his bond . . . look to his bond." The implication is clear; Shylock has heard of the shipwreck.

Surely, says Salarino, if Antonio forfeits the bond, "thou wilt not take his flesh." Shylock assures them that he will, for he is determined to be revenged on Antonio for many grievances, all committed against Shylock for one reason: because Shylock is a Jew. A Jew is a human being the same as a Christian, Shylock continues; like a Christian, a Jew has "eyes . . . hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions . . . [is] hurt . . . subject to the same diseases, [and] healed by the same means." Like a Christian, a Jew bleeds if pricked, and since a Christian always revenges any wrong received from a Jew, Shylock will follow this example. A servant enters then and informs Salanio and Salarino that Antonio wishes to see them at his house.

As they depart, Shylock's friend Tubal enters. Tubal has traced Jessica to Genoa, where he has heard news of her but could not find her. Shylock again moans about his losses, especially about his diamonds and ducats; he wishes Jessica were dead. Tubal interrupts and tells Shylock that he picked up additional news in Genoa: Another of Antonio's ships has been "cast away, coming from Tripolis." Shylock is elated. But as Tubal returns to the subject of Jessica's excessive expenditures in Genoa, Shylock groans again. Thus Tubal reminds Shylock of Antonio's tragic misfortunes, and the moneylender exults once more. One thing is certain, Tubal assures Shylock: "Antonio is certainly undone." Shylock agrees and instructs Tubal to pay a police sergeant in advance to arrest Antonio if he forfeits the bond.

This act opens with Salanio and Salarino again functioning as a chorus, informing the audience of the development of events against which the action of the scene will take place. The suggestion made earlier that Antonio's mercantile ventures at sea might founder is now made specific. One of Antonio's ships lies "wracked on the narrow seas . . . where the carcases of many a tall ship lie buried." The news of the danger to Antonio also prepares us for the entrance of Shylock, the embodiment of that danger, who has by now discovered Jessica's elopement.

The moneylender enters, and both we and Salanio know perfectly well what news concerns Shylock; Salanio's sardonic greeting, with its pretense of wanting to know "the news," is calculated to infuriate Shylock, for even though we have not seen Shylock since the elopement of his daughter, we know that his anger will have been fueled by the fact that Lorenzo — and, by implication, the whole Christian community — has dealt him a blow. One should be fully aware that Shylock is ever conscious of his Jewishness in a Christian community. Then at the mention of Antonio, Shylock says ominously, "Let him look to his bond." Without question, the bond is "merry" no longer — but Salanio has not comprehended this yet. His half-serious question "Thou wilt not take his flesh. What's that good for?" is answered savagely: "If it will feed nothing else, it will feed my revenge," Shylock declares.

The malicious digs of Salanio and Salarino produce one of Shylock's most dramatic speeches in the play. It is written in prose, but it is a good example of the superb intensity to which Shakespeare can raise mere prose. Shylock's series of accusing, rhetorical questions which form the central portion of the speech, from "Hath not a Jew eyes?" to "If you poison us, do we not die?" completely silences Shylock's tormentors. In fact, this speech silences us. We ourselves have to ponder it. It is one of the greatest pleas for human tolerance in the whole of dramatic literature. But it is also something more, and we must not lose sight of its dramatic importance: It is a prelude to Shylock's final decision concerning how he will deal with Antonio.

Shylock speaks of a Christian's "humility" with heavy sarcasm; "humility," he says, is a much-talked-of Christian virtue, but a virtue which is not much in evidence. The "humility" of a Christian, Shylock says, ceases when a Christian is harmed, for then the Christian takes revenge. That is the Christian's solution, and that will also be Shylock's course of action, his solution to the wrongs he has suffered: "The villainy you teach me I will execute." And toward the end of the speech, he repeats, like a refrain, the word "revenge."

Shylock's speech on revenge is so powerful and so unanswerable that it is lost on Salanio and Salarino, who are none too bright anyway, but their silence on stage stuns us. Shakespeare has manipulated our sympathy. Then, just when we were secure in feeling that Shylock's reasoning was just, Shakespeare shows us another facet of Shylock, one which we have seen before — his concern with possessions — and thus we must reconsider the whole matter of justice which we thought we had just solved. Shylock's friend Tubal enters, and in the exchange which follows, we realize that Shylock has become a miser in order to build his own personal defense against the hostile Christian mercantile world of Venice. But his defense has increased to such an extent that he no longer can contain it; it possesses him now. He cannot properly distinguish between the love of riches and his love for his daughter, Jessica. Shylock's obsession for possessing has blinded him; his anger at the Christian world has corrupted even his love for his daughter: "I would my daughter were dead at my foot, and the jewels in her ear! Would she were hearsed at my foot, and the ducats in her coffin!" Thereby, we see the extent of Shylock's hatred. By the end of the scene, the audience is convinced, if it was not before, that Shylock's attack on Antonio will be absolutely relentless. If he can, he will literally take his "pound of flesh."

***Significance:***

Salarino and Solanio reflect on the news that another of [Antonio](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Merchant-of-Venice/character-analysis/#Antonio)'s ships has been reported lost in "the Goodwins." They hope the news is only hearsay but call their source "an honest woman of her word." Just as they are hoping this will be the end of bad news for Antonio, [Shylock](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Merchant-of-Venice/character-analysis/#Shylock) approaches them. The three men discuss [Jessica](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Merchant-of-Venice/character-analysis/#Jessica)'s departure as well as Antonio's lost ship and what it means for his bond. Salarino and Solanio ask Shylock what he wants with a pound of Antonio's flesh, and Shylock tells them it doesn't matter what he does with the flesh: he just wants revenge. Even though he's Jewish, he says, he has the same feelings and the same weaknesses and desires that any Christian has. He concludes by saying a Christian would seek revenge on a Jew if wronged, so he is also entitled to revenge. Salarino and Solanio do not have an opportunity to respond because they are summoned to Antonio's for dinner.

Shylock talks to his friend and fellow moneylender Tubal, who brings news from Genoa about Jessica. No one has been able to find her, but Tubal shares stories he has heard about her. Shylock laments the loss of his daughter, the money she took, and the money he is spending on the fruitless search for her. He wishes Jessica were "dead at [his] foot and the jewels in her ear! Would she were hearsed at my foot and the ducats in her coffin!" Tubal offers news that a third ship of Antonio's has been lost near Tripoli. The conversation shifts back and forth between Jessica and Antonio. Shylock is upset to hear Jessica traded his turquoise ring for a monkey—a ring her mother had once given Shylock. But he's happy to hear more about Antonio's losses and asks Tubal to "fee [him] an officer" to arrest Antonio before meeting him at the synagogue.

Salarino and Solanio continue to participate in gossip about [Antonio](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Merchant-of-Venice/character-analysis/#Antonio)'s fortunes, although they do not consider themselves gossips; this is a title they only reserve for the source they consider trustworthy. The ship she has told him about is allegedly lost in an area called the Goodwins, which is likely a reference to the Goodwin sands, an area of the English Channel known for treacherous currents. Their conversation with [Shylock](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Merchant-of-Venice/character-analysis/#Shylock) establishes a connection between Shylock's anger at losing his daughter and his anger at Antonio. Even though Antonio did not take Jessica—and there is no evidence he is involved with her elopement with Lorenzo in any way—Shylock knows Antonio and Lorenzo are associated with one another, at the very least through their mutual friendship with [Bassanio](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Merchant-of-Venice/character-analysis/#Bassanio). Furthermore, they are both Christians, and this is sufficient reason for Shylock to associate the two in his mind and add [Jessica](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Merchant-of-Venice/character-analysis/#Jessica)'s disappearance to his other grievances against Antonio. In a sense Shylock expects Antonio to suffer for all his kind, just as he believes Antonio has made him suffer because of his "nation."

The connection between Antonio and Jessica in Shylock's mind becomes more apparent during Shylock's conversation with Tubal, which literally shifts focus between Antonio and Jessica from one line to the next. The juxtaposition of Shylock's disappointment at being unable to find Jessica with his eagerness to punish Antonio creates a visual clue to the indirect connection between these two topics in Shylock's mind. He sees Antonio's misfortune as a consolation for his disappointment about Jessica. Shylock is therefore able to channel his rage about Jessica into his rage at Antonio; he can't punish his daughter for her disobedience, but he *can* punish Antonio. His glee at the prospect makes Shylock appear sinister and undoes much of the goodwill he earns through his speech to Salarino and Solanio in which he enumerates all the ways in which he is just like them.

***Summary and Analysis Part by Part***

***Summary Part 1:***

[Solanio](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-merchant-of-venice/characters) and [Salerio](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-merchant-of-venice/characters) discuss the unlucky events that have befallen [Antonio](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-merchant-of-venice/characters/antonio). It is rumored that another of Antonio's ships has been wrecked. Solanio and Salerio worry that Antonio will be ruined because of the "cruel bond" (contract) that Antonio has made with [Shylock](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-merchant-of-venice/characters/shylock). Just then, Shylock himself appears.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Though Shylock and Antonio have made a perfectly legal contract, the Christians see Shylock's actions as "cruel." The scene also suggests that weeks or months have passed since the end of Act 2.

***Summary Part 2:***

[Shylock](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-merchant-of-venice/characters/shylock) accuses [Solanio](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-merchant-of-venice/characters) and [Salerio](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-merchant-of-venice/characters) of having helped [Jessica](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-merchant-of-venice/characters) elope from his house. They boast that, indeed, they did help. Shylock damns them. When Solanio says that Jessica was old enough to choose her own husband and leave home, Shylock responds that, no, she is his "flesh and blood" (3.1.33) and should have stayed. Salerio taunts him that there is "more difference between thy flesh and hers than between jet (a deep black stone) and ivory" (3.1.34–5).

***Analysis Part 2:***

In 2.3:, Jessica pondered whether you are related to someone because you share blood or because you share similar "manners." Shylock here argues that "flesh and blood" are the true measure of relatedness. But Solanio and Salerio's response that the beautiful "white" Jessica is completely unlike the "black" Shylock indicates that they believe one's manners, or even one's willingness to be Christian, define relatedness.

***Summary Part 3:***

[Solanio](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-merchant-of-venice/characters) then asks whether [Shylock](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-merchant-of-venice/characters/shylock) has heard any more news of [Antonio](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-merchant-of-venice/characters/antonio)'s losses at sea. Shylock says he has, and ominously adds that Antonio can look forward to the "extraction" of his bond. Solanio can't believe that Shylock would really want a pound of Antonio's flesh, but Shylock affirms that he wants it to "feed" his "revenge" (3.1.54) on Antonio for mocking him, causing him to lose money, and insulting the Jewish "nation" (3.1.50).

***Analysis Part 3:***

In 1.3, Shylock argued that charging interest is just like breeding sheep. Now Shylock explicitly states that his desire for revenge will involve manipulating a legal obligation (the "bond," or contract) in order to treat Antonio like a piece of meat, an animal carcass, that is used as food.

***Summary Part 4:***

[Shylock](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-merchant-of-venice/characters/shylock) goes on to say that a Jew has "hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions" and is "fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as a Christian is" (53–7). If you prick a Jew, he'll bleed, if you tickle him he'll laugh, if you poison him, he'll die. It follows, just as logically, Shylock argues, that if you wrong a Jew, he will seek revenge, just as a Christian would. Shylock promises to use the same "villainy" that the Venetian Christians "teach," and to beat them at their own game.

***Analysis Part 4:***

Shylock argues that what he's doing—using the legal system to persecute the Christian Antonio—is exactly what the Christians have done to him and to all Jews, which is true. And in arguing for the justice of his revenge, Shylock denies any distinction between Christians and Jews. They're all humans, he argues, based on their identical animal functions: bleeding, dying, etc. Shylock treats the need for revenge as another animal need.

***Summary Part 5:***

One of [Antonio's](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-merchant-of-venice/characters/antonio) servants enters and announces that Antonio would like to see [Solanio](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-merchant-of-venice/characters) and [Salerio](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-merchant-of-venice/characters). As they leave, [Tubal](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-merchant-of-venice/characters), a Jewish friend of [Shylock's](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-merchant-of-venice/characters/shylock) enters. Tubal has been searching for [Jessica](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-merchant-of-venice/characters) in Genoa, and has heard rumors of her, but has been unable to find her. Shylock rants against his daughter, and bemoans his financial losses. He is especially bitter when Tubal reports that Jessica has taken a ring—given to Shylock by a woman named Leah, presumably Jessica's mother—and has traded that ring for a monkey.

***Analysis Part 5:***

The Jews Shylock and Tubal share a camaraderie that is similar to that share by the Venetian Christians. Jessica's sale of her mother's ring marks her as unfaithful to her family's past, and suggests that Jessica is willing to sell her virginity (rings often symbolized female genitalia) for animal lust (the monkey). It also foreshadows what will happen when Portia and Nerissa give rings to their husbands later in the play.

***Summary part 6:***

[Shylock](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-merchant-of-venice/characters/shylock) is somewhat consoled, though, when [Tubal](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-merchant-of-venice/characters) reminds him that [Antonio](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-merchant-of-venice/characters/antonio) has lost another of his ships at Tripolis, and "is certainly undone" (3.1.124). Shylock announces that he will take his pound of flesh from Antonio's heart if Antonio forfeits on his loan. He then tells Tubal to go and meet him later at the synagogue.

***Analysis Part 6:***

Shylock again insists that he will have his revenge on Antonio by enforcing the legal contract they have signed. The Jews' agreement to meet at the synagogue, implies that the Jews and Christians of Venice occupy separate social spaces.