

You don't have to be Jewish to be offended but it helps...

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I am not Jewish but I do have some sympathy with [accusations](#) that [Lord Levy](#) is coming under fire partly for his Jewishness during the current 'cash for peerages' investigation. David Rowan, editor of the [Jewish Chronicle](#), (who I should declare is an acquaintance of mine), believes that anti-semitic language is creeping in to the coverage of the affair, which, of course, now has little or nothing to do with cash for peerages and everything to do with a power struggle between the police and Number 10.

But is the Establishment and the news media being anti-semitic? In today's JC, Rabbi Yitzchak Schochet, of Mill Hill Synagogue in North-West London, where the embattled peer is a congregant, denounces "the blatant nastiness in some of the tabloids and the recent seeming trial by media". Rabbi Schochet has blamed "sinister corners" for the leaks, and condemned "the mean-spiritedness so prevalent in this country". He also used a television interview to claim: "The Jewish community is becoming increasingly more sensitive that there is one Jew, who has been called the most dynamic Jew in Anglo-Jewry, seemingly being hung out to dry here." I have to say that I agree with some of this, but that if someone themselves is so high-profile about being Jewish then it is difficult not to refer to them without mentioning that aspect of their lives. I do believe that there is a growing amount of low-level, unthinking references to people's Jewish faith or background and some of it is pejorative. But I am not convinced we are yet facing a significant increase in anti-semitism which is the *systematic* denigration of Jews and their faith. Last night I was reading the Concentration Camp novel [Fateless by Imre Kertesz](#). It is a devastating account of the banal evil of the Nazis. But in its early pages it is also a chillingly realistic portrayal of the way that very low level casual prejudice on the part of a society can lead to appalling collective acts of inhumanity. We should all mind our language.

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