

The Board of Deputies of British Jews  
1 Torriano Mews  
Kentish Town  
London NW5 2RZ

31<sup>st</sup> March 2019

For the attention of Marie van der Zyl, Deputies President

Dear Marie,

The world is still reeling from the massacre which occurred in New Zealand two weeks ago. Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern described the mass shootings at the two Christchurch mosques as “an extraordinary and unprecedented act of violence.” The former rabbi of Auckland Shul, Rabbi Ralph Genende, writes: “There’s a line out of Jewish tradition that is as evocative as it is acute: hatred, it says, knows no borders; it is as boundless as it is barbaric; it is as negating as it is nihilistic.”

It brought to the fore - once more - the topic of phobias and hate and the language used to describe them. Michael Lazarus’s letter in the Jewish Chronicle (29 March) questioned the equivalence of antisemitism/Judeophobia and Islamophobia. Whatever they are called, phobias are all based on irrational prejudice of people of a ‘different’ creed and must always be condemned.

David W. Augsburger called hate “the malignant negativism that lurks in the human soul” and defined a spectrum of hates. The abhorrent atrocity in New Zealand was indiscriminate hate, wherein the names of the victims are unknown - even irrelevant, but those like your late father Barry Kaye personalise their hatred and prejudice.

The gentile-phobic views he expressed in the letters he sent to me were ‘extraordinary’, and the words in his final letter threatening me with violence which would produce blood on the streets was ‘unprecedented’. Your father presented himself as head of your family and “mentor, teacher and guide to the children, of the Holy Law of the Torah” for your two daughters. Was he not aware of the Jewish value of *shalom bayit*, a peaceful household, in which disagreements can be set aside for the greater purpose of family love, holiness, and togetherness? It was bewildering for me to be the recipient of a complete stranger’s uninhibited hostility.

How does hate happen? Is it instinctual, inborn, or indeed taught? Aside from the distress your father caused to me, given the close relationship he had with your children it raises other concerns. The influence on children of those that hold extreme views of prejudice has been studied by Mahzarin Banaji, a renowned Harvard University psychologist, brain researcher, and racism and physical prejudice expert. She suggests that even though children may not understand the “why” of their feelings, those exposed to prejudice tend to accept and embrace it as young as age 3, and in just a matter of days. Was there a ‘rational’ reason for the prejudicial and hateful views of your father? What malign influence did they have on his family?

As reported in the press (21 March 2019) you sent a message of support from the Board of Deputies for the New Zealand victims. It is anomalous that my wife and I have never received any sympathetic support from you, for us being targets of your father's prejudices. By implication you countenanced his abusive communications by doing nothing to stop him sending them to us. Rabbi Hillel said "What is hateful to yourself, do not do to your fellow man" and - much more recently - Rabbi Mark Goldsmith (formerly of Alyth Gardens) said that staying *shtum* is not an option.

We should all be bold and honest enough to speak out against all forms of extremism. Wherever it is found.

Yours sincerely,

George Rooker,  
Historian