

Rabbi Raymond Apple

The title of Honorary Fellow of the University was conferred upon Rabbi Raymond Apple by the Chancellor Dame Leonie Kramer AC DBE at a graduation ceremony held at 9.30am on 18 November 2005.

Citation

Chancellor, I have the honour to present Rabbi Raymond Apple for the conferring of the title of Honorary Fellow of the University.

Rabbi Apple was awarded the Queen's Silver Jubilee Medal in 1977, became a Member of the Order of Australia in 1979, received the Reserve Force Decoration in 1990 and the Centenary of Federation Medal in 2001 and was appointed an Officer in the Order of Australia in 2004.

Born in Melbourne, he studied Arts and Law at The University of Melbourne and has a Master of Letters degree from the University of New England from which University he received a Distinguished Alumni award in 1994. He was ordained as a Rabbi in London and until 1972 ministered to two London synagogues and was a member of the Chief Rabbi's Cabinet. In 1972 he returned to Australia to a post as senior minister of the Great Synagogue in Sydney, where he has remained as Senior Rabbi for 32 years, despite attempts to lure him back to England to the Chief Rabbinate.

His association with the University of Sydney began in 1973 when he began to fill an important gap in the Curriculum of the Department of Semitic Studies through his teaching of Rabbinic Hebrew and, later, Jewish Civilisation, Thought and Culture. He was a consultant to the Department when the courses in Jewish Civilisation, Thought and Culture were being designed and developed for a growing Faculty of Arts. These courses have been an important part of the curriculum of the Department of Semitic Studies (now Hebrew, Bible and Jewish Studies) from that time until the present day and Rabbi Apple has worked hard for a continuous period of 30 years in this teaching.

During the same period he became a Trustee of the Mandelbaum Trust, which has a direct link with the University of Sydney and funds scholarly activity in the field of Jewish Studies and which built the Sydney University College known as Mandelbaum House. Rabbi Apple is Joint Master of this College and has served in this position since 1996. He plans to remain as Joint Master following his retirement from the ministry.

Rabbi Apple's contribution to academic life has been far wider than these few facts indicate. Since 1991 he has taught a course in Jewish Law at the University of New South Wales and has written widely on Jewish history, Jewish religion and law, and the global problems facing the Jewish world and the world as a whole. Special mention should be made of his contribution to the cause of women's role in religious life, where, despite some criticism, he has spearheaded female participation in religious activities at the synagogue.

During his very busy career he has served as a Reserve Chaplain in the Australian Army and since 1988 has been Senior Rabbi to the Australian Defence Force. He is currently chairman of the Religious Advisory Committee to the Services. He is also a senior judge at the Jewish ecclesiastical court and a trusted counsellor within the community. He has occupied many consultancies and public positions and has been a leader in interfaith dialogue.

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