“Deep in his heart he began to feel the need of being a Jew”. Theodor Herzl wrote this in his essay, “The Menorah”. Many people felt that need and returned to Jewish identity, which (Herzl’s words again) “became so powerful that it crystallised from vague emotions into a definite idea”. This programme traces the return of some leading “reversioners”. It also asks whether Judaism itself has been true to its own principles, and it looks at the phenomenon of Jews who abandon belief and become secular.

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After holding two pulpits in Britain, Rabbi Raymond Apple, AO RFD was senior rabbi of the Great Synagogue, Sydney, for 32 years and one of Australia’s best known religious leaders.

He lectured at Sydney and NSW Universities and was senior rabbi to the Australian Defence Force and judge/registrar of the Sydney Beth Din as well as president of the Orthodox Rabbinate of Australia and New Zealand and president of the Australian Jewish Historical Society. He is Past Deputy Grand Master of Freemasonry in NSW and ACT.

In retirement he is engaged in research, writing and teaching. He lives in Jerusalem with his wife Marian; they have 20 grandchildren and several great-grandchildren.

Rabbi Freedman is currently the Associate Rabbi of The Central Synagogue, Bondi. He began his rabbinic career in London in 1973, before taking a position on Sydney’s upper north shore in 1988.

He lectures at Sydney University as part of The Jewish Civilisation, Thought and Culture Program, and also at UNSW in Jewish Law.

As a Chief Examiner and Senior Marker he has been involved over many years with the NSW Board of Studies, and is also a regular contributor to ABC radio on religious affairs.