

Beth Din: It's not about press freedom

THE following comment was posted on OzTorah — a website by Beth Din Registrar Rabbi Raymond Apple — last week.

It comes in the wake of the communal debate which erupted when the Sydney Beth Din expressed opposition to the *Australian Jewish News*' coverage of Jewish involvement in the Mardi Gras, and requested the *AJN* editor to attend a meeting to discuss it (a request which was declined):

"It is no secret that the Sydney Beth Din and the Rabbinical Council of NSW have been highly critical of the extensive coverage of the Sydney Mardi Gras by the *Australian Jewish News*.



Rabbi Raymond Apple

"The *Jewish News* has claimed that it is not an Orthodox publication, that it reflects the spectrum of the community, and that most of the letters it has published have supported its stand. Various writers of articles and letters have demanded that the Beth Din "think again", and many have used uncomplimentary adjectives about the rabbis.

"The fact is, however, that this is not an issue of press freedom, but of press responsibility. The press need not and should not celebrate every activity in which Jews may be involved as if it were a Jewish activity. And in defining what is or is not a Jewish activity, the criterion is not what a particular editor thinks, or what some, even many, of his readers say.

"There happens to be such a thing as Torah, and if the Torah view is deliberately edged out and its duly-accredited exponents marginalised and derided, one can reach no other conclusion, but that the community and its newspaper are applying the wrong standards.

"The rabbinate will not abdicate its sacred responsibility, established by the first rabbi, Moshe Rabbenu, and carried on in an unbroken chain of tradition through the ages, to say, *V'zot HaTorah* — This is the Word of God.

"The Beth Din will not 'think again'; maybe the *Jewish News* should."

■ "We can't bury our heads in the sand", page 6

■ How a community got hijacked, page 19