

Brenda and I first became involved with Jeffrey and Gloria soon after they came with their young family from Scotland to take up the position of Rabbi and Rebbetsen of the Kenton community in 1979. Our two daughters, Suzanne and Nicole, had called round to their house a day after they arrived in Kenton to ask if they could buy challot for them for Shabbat. They subsequently became very friendly with their children and we followed suit with the parents.

Jeffrey soon impressed the community by the quality of his sermons and his caring attitude, ably supported by Gloria. Together they made a formidable team. Over the years our friendship grew stronger and when they left Kenton to move to Stanmore we soon joined them in this very warm community. As Jeffrey draws near to retirement this is a timely moment to assess what he has achieved in Stanmore both as a Rabbi and a man.

What differentiates Jeffrey from the majority of his fellow rabbis in the United Synagogue is his independence of mind, originality of thought, courage of his convictions and his utter sincerity. His own deep knowledge of Jewish history, philosophy and practice of Judaism gives him a confidence that does not require outward manifestations of religiosity like a beard and black hat. He has always been a strong believer and supporter of Centrist Judaism, even as the United Synagogue has moved more and more to the right. He has espoused the positive role of women in the running of Stanmore Shul and was the first rabbi to give his blessing to a Women's Tefilah Group in Stanmore.

He is a prolific author and always finds new insights in every subject he covers. He is a wonderful wordsmith and his hesped (often written at very short notice) are always apposite, stimulating and uplifting. His Shabbat morning sermons are well constructed and delivered with great enthusiasm and wit. His addresses to Barmitzva boys are always very personal and invariably include humour and a telling message at the end.

As the size of the community has increased the load falling on the Rabbi and Rebbetsen has increased enormously. Stanmore is an ageing community, although younger members are joining daily. The task of visiting the sick, counseling people with real family problems, officiating at simachot and funerals and stonings is formidable, but always carried out with real empathy and understanding.

Jeffrey and Gloria will be sadly missed by Stanmore, who will find it very difficult, if not impossible, to replace their dedicated service to the community, the stimulating sermons and lectures by Jeffrey and his ability to relate current affairs and politics to Jewish teachings and writings. We wish them both every happiness in their well earned retirement.

Dr Michael Bliss