

It is not often that a United Synagogue can honestly boast that it has a Rabbi for all seasons. But Stanmore for almost twenty years has had just that. When visiting other synagogues or meeting with their members and hearing of the grumbles and complaints about their Ministers we merely have to mention that we are members of Stanmore to elicit the comment “You don’t know how lucky you are to have such a wonderful Rabbi and Rabbitzin”.

It is difficult to identify one facet of Rabbi Dr. Jeffrey Cohen’s ministry at Stanmore. The fact is that he is a brilliant all-rounder with an ability to be all things to everyone without compromising his sincerity and high principles. It is this that has endeared him so much to our community. Whether you are an extremely devout worshipper, a frequenter of shiurim and lectures, a Shabbat attendee or only a 3 times a year visitor the Rabbi is always welcoming. On an individual basis he is modest, quiet, polite, even self effacing, always attentive and charming, exuding sympathy or pleasure according to the circumstances but always natural, and above all normal. He can converse on cricket, tennis (which he plays regularly), politics, Israel, communal politics and is now an expert on pension problems.

On a communal level, he has maintained the highest traditions of the United Synagogue in dress and the performance of all the services carried out in a traditional United Synagogue. He delivers a challenging sermon and always seems to be on the same wavelength as the community. His addresses to barmitzvah boys and bat mitzvah girls, to couples under the chupah and regrettably all too often at funerals are unsurpassed by any other. One member of the community was heard to comment after a Hespel by Rabbi Cohen at a funeral, “I hope I pass on before he retires”. He can leyn at the drop of a hat or conduct a musaph service on Rosh Hashanah without prior warning. Another facet of Rabbi Cohen’s tenure at Stanmore is that he gets on with all his colleagues and has the support of all the other ministers and Rabbis in our community because they all respect and like him. Something which itself is almost unique in the history of orthodox synagogues in the UK. He has published many scholarly and interesting books on questions of Judaism and many companion books for the various festivals, which have become fixtures for nearly every Jewish home.

The ministry of Rabbi Jeffrey Cohen has been such a success not only because of his great talents but also because of the fantastic team that he and Gloria are. The Rabbi may not always be absolutely up to scratch when it comes to remembering the names and personal details of all the vast membership of the community and their accolades but Gloria knows everyone and soon briefs him on the background of the individual however infrequently the person may attend Shul. She is a walking encyclopaedia of communal personalities. There is nothing she does not remember about one’s family

and frequently can be seen whispering to her husband the salient facts about someone he may not have met for a long time or at all. Her support, strength of character, warmth and charm has made the ministry of the Cohens at Stanmore one of the greatest successes of the United Synagogue.

Rabbi Jeffrey Cohen is not only a scholar with the highest degrees and qualifications on subjects Jewish and otherwise but he is the epitome of what Jews College of old sought to produce. A well-rounded English gentleman with deep Jewish scholarship but orthodox with a tolerance that does not put his religiosity in your face. The general view of practically everyone in the community is that he and Gloria will be a very hard act to follow. Unlike so many of the present generation Rabbis he has never been ashamed of his English roots and traditions and as we contemplate the future without him at the helm it does not look too good.

Hopefully the Cohen team will return to visit us from time to time as scholar in residence with Gloria as counsellor in residence. They will always be welcome here. It is our sincere wish for them both that they enjoy an active but less stressful retirement in the Garden Suburb and Israel.

Clive Boxer