Rabbi Cohen has been working in the Community for twenty years.

Together with his wife Gloria, he has been at the helm throughout a period of growth which has taken Stanmore & Canons Park Synagogue to the largest membership of any orthodox community in Europe.

As it has grown, so has its influence and the awareness amongst Anglo Jewry to this fact. It is a testament to Rabbi Cohen that through this period of growth the community has remained as one, held together by his inspirational leadership. We recognise and acknowledge the effort and work he has put in over many years and thank him for his devoted service.

On the weekend of 25th and 26th March Rabbi Dr Jeffrey Cohen and Gloria kindly returned to Stanmore.

On Shabbat Rabbi Dr Jeffrey Cohen delivered a valedictory address and a shiur at the Seudah Shlishit in his honour.

On Sunday a farewell reception took place. The guest of honour was the Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks and in attendance were Lady Elaine Sacks, Lady Jakobovits, Dayan Ehrentreu, the President of the United Synagogue, Dr Simon Hochhauser and many other dignitaries.

Over 600 people came to Shul that afternoon to acknowledge Rabbi Dr Jeffrey Cohen’s marvellous work and service and to pay tribute to him.

The event was chaired by our Warden Lewis Bloch.
The Speeches

- Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks
- Rabbi Andrew Shaw
- Dr. Simon Hochhauser – President of the United Synagogue
- Mr. Ronnie Metzger
- Rabbi Dr. Jeffrey Cohen

Rabbi Andrew Shaw

Chief Rabbi, Dayan Ehrentrau, Rabbonim, President of the United Synagogue, Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentleman and of course Rabbi Cohen and Gloria

May I start with a quote

‘I shudder when I think that a young rabbi with no experience can start work in a community and within days have to deal with congregants who may be experiencing very difficult situations’ Rabbi Dr Jeffrey Cohen, the JC, yesterday

Upon arriving at Stanmore over 5 years ago, it was you and Gloria who prepared me for those difficult situations.
Whether it was a wedding, bar mitzvah, Shiva house, hospital visit or God forbid a funeral you nurtured and guided me in the correct way to minister to a community- and for that I truly thank you – thank both of you.

That first year we spent many hours in your office, as you fielded question after question, each answer informed by your keen insight, framed by your Halachic knowledge and wrapped in your abundant experience.

I fondly recall a letter I received from the Rabbinical Council about an innovative scheme they were setting up. It was to begin a mentoring programme between young Rabbonim and those who were more experienced. I called the Rabbi in charge of the programme to decline their offer of a mentor –‘Why?’ he said ‘Because I already have one’ I replied.

It was not only your pastoral knowledge that inspired me, but your tremendous love and depth of learning both Jewish and Secular. We learn in Pirkei Avot – Hafoch ba, I hafoch ba, d’ kulah ba – delve into the Torah and continue to delve for all is in it. Your life has been spent delving into learning and sharing it with your community whether from the pulpit or the pages of a book. Your passion for Modern Orthodoxy has always been a beacon for me in a Jewish world that is sometimes afraid to stand up and be counted.

Your understanding of halacha and how it can and should be applied to communal life has been another lesson that I have learned from. Your understanding of where people are coming from and your wonderful grasp of chanoch al pi darco – educated to HIS or HER way has allowed our community to flourish and grow where others may have allowed it to splinter and shrink.

However above all else I will thank you most for allowing me the space to grow – to forge my own chelek, my own contribution to Stanmore shul.

Whether the shul theatre productions, our Shlock Rock Concerts, the changing of our Simchat Torah Celebrations- you supported, you encouraged and you participated wholeheartedly. I cannot thank you enough for that show of collegiality, friendship and belief in our shared vision.

In the late 80’s I recall coming to Stanmore sometimes on a Sunday afternoon for Mincha and Maariv along with my Bnei Akiva friends in the area- Stanmore had
just appointed a new Rabbi. Little did I know that almost twenty years later that Rabbi would still be in Stanmore and I would have the honour of calling him and his wonderful wife Gloria my colleague but most importantly my friend. Jeffrey we will miss you, I will miss you but your messages of inclusivism, modern Orthodoxy and religious Zionism will continue to flow through this community – a community that you and Gloria have Shaped magnificently over the last twenty years and all of us say to you as we will say as a community next Shabbat.

Chazak, Chazak V'nitchazek

Be Strong, be strong and may we be strengthened.

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**Mr Ronnie Metzger**

Chief Rabbi, Lady Sacks, Lady Amelie, Dayan Ehrentrau, Rabbonim, Reverend Gentlemen, President and Honorary Officers of the United Synagogue, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

Mr Chairman, may I preface my remarks on this most auspicious occasion by thanking our honorary executives, Life President Jack Lewis and senior elder of the Shul, Sidney Frosh, for giving me this opportunity to pay tribute to our learned Rabbi and his Rabbonit, Gloria.

I claimed the privilege of speaking today because, together with Maurice Hackenbroch and Julian Synett, my fellow Honorary Officers at that time, we brought Rabbi Cohen and Gloria to Stanmore in 1986.

Saying farewell to such a popular couple, who have contributed significantly to this community in particular, and to Anglo Jewry in general is both difficult and sad; but that having been said, it must be tempered with our thanks to Hashem for their having managed to serve us so conscientiously for 20 years and to finish, dare I say it, in apparently reasonable good health.

Rabbi, It doesn’t seem possible that it was only 20 years ago that you and Gloria, together with your family of four young children, came to our developing community and what eventful years they have been. The community has since grown to 1800 families, Kane Yirbu, and our complex of buildings now incorporates Stanmore Synagogue Community Care, the brainchild of Gloria,
which has become a model for all United Synagogue local welfare programmes. The devotion and commitment of our members to Judaism and to Israel has intensified throughout this period, in which you and Gloria have led us; both as our spiritual leaders and as our friends. You have shared with us all our joys and Simchas as well as guiding us through difficult times and comforting us in times of sorrow and grief.

Rabbi, building on the firm foundation laid by your most respected predecessor, Rabbi Avrom Chaitowitz, Zichrono Livrocha, you, together with Gloria and your now-grown-up family have shown us how to live a way of life of Torah Im Derech Eretz, a way we strive to emulate. We are proud that in recent years so many of our young people have spent their gap year at Yeshiva or Sem, resulting, to date, in 8 of our young men obtaining Semicha. As a distinguished internationally recognized author, writer, communicator and scholar we have been inspired, and oft awakened by your sermons, your shiurim and your lectures. Your numerous publications have made it possible for many in our community and beyond to comprehend the meaning and beauty of our tephitot, Shabbat and Chagim as well as creating greater understanding and observance of our religion.

Our communal profile has been raised by your unwavering support of Israel, and particularly your efforts to promote our local and most successful Ladies Tephilla Group, encouraging and supporting them in the development of their spiritual needs and quest for knowledge.

Giving Tsdaka and aiding others is part of your make up. In particular, your leadership provided the impetus to raise the substantial sums for us to donate an ambulance for Magen David Adom in Israel. You were also at the forefront of fundraising to aid our brethren in the Ukraine and other parts of Russia, as well as those in oppressed or distressed circumstances both here and overseas.

Your term of office has been characterised by the harmony in which you have worked with our Honorary Officers, past and present, our administrative office led by Brenda Dresner, and above all, with many fellow Ministers in the community.

You have maintained excellent relationships with fellow Rabbonim and in addition to the Chief Rabbi and Dayan Ehrentrau, Av Beth Din we are pleased to welcome here today many rabbis from the locality and the wider community.

You have extended the hand of friendship to leaders of other faiths and shown us how to co-exist in a multi-cultural society, without compromising our religious principals.
Present and past members of our Executive have shared my experience of working with you. You never procrastinate and invariably deal promptly and efficiently with all demands. Assistance requested, meets with an early well considered and courteous response and early action.

Your Talmudic mind, oratory, linguistic ability, advocacy and negotiation skills would, I am sure, had you not entered the Rabbinate, guaranteed a successful career in any profession and – who knows – you might even have become a warden of a Shul!

You have become the accepted face and a leading advocate of Modern Orthodoxy. Sadly, a successor for such a position in your mould has been difficult to find. Unfortunately after you were made they seem to have thrown that mould away.

Gloria, let me now turn to you. In all that you have undertaken for and on behalf of our community, you have demonstrated willingness and the ability to act as your husband’s perfect Ezer Cenegdo. I referred before to your major role in the establishment of our Community Care initiative and this has enabled us, with the aid of specially trained voluntary help to maintain a high standard of service for our large membership. You have shared the burden of your husband’s work wherever possible and somehow managed to reconcile the needs of a growing family with the urgent demands of our community.

Often by his side and, in some aspects, a little ahead, you have fulfilled with compassion, charm and distinction, the multifaceted roles of advisor, companion, confidante, computer operator, Chevra Kadisha organiser, chauffeuse, counselor, diary keeper, sermon quality troller, shadchan, telephonist, walking membership directory (I could go on) but above all, you are the perfect wife of Rabbi Dr. Jeffrey Cohen, the Rav of Stanmore & Canons Park Synagogue.

Rabbi and Gloria, in Pirkei Avot in the third chapter, verse 22 it quotes “Rabbi Elazar Ben Azariah used to say “ Anyone whose wisdom exceeds his good deeds, to what is he likened? To a tree whose branches are numerous but whose roots are few. Then the wind comes and uproots and turns it upside down”. He then goes on to say: “But one whose good deeds exceeds his wisdom, to what is he likened? To a tree whose branches are few but whose roots are numerous; even if all the winds in the world were to come and blow against it, they would not budge it from its place”.

Both your good deeds and your wisdom will likewise survive and no wind or storm can ever erase your exemplary service from our memories. We wish you both bracha VeHatzlacha, enjoying the company of your wonderful family Bis Hundert unt Tsvunzig and, remember, you will always have a warm and special place in the hearts and minds of the members of Stanmore & Canons Park Shul.

Thank you.

Rabbi Dr Jeffrey Cohen

Mr Chairman, Chief Rabbi and Lady Elaine, Dayan Ehrentreu, Rabbi Dr Abraham Levy, Rabbi Andrew Shaw, rabbinical colleagues, President of the United Synagogue, Dr Simon Hochauser, Life President, Mr Jack Lewis and Elders, Mr Sidney Frosh and Mr Ronnie Metzger, Honorary Executive, my dear family, friends all.

Looking around this teeming shul today, I could be forgiven for thinking that an awful lot of people have turned up to ensure that I truly am leaving. Regulars will know that, since my retirement date on December 31st I’ve made quite a few return appearances. The dominant religion’s ‘Second Coming’ has clearly got nothing on me.
On behalf of Gloria and myself, may I first thank the Chief Rabbi, Sir Jonathan, and Lady Elaine for taking time out of their feverish schedule to grace this occasion, and for the most kind and eloquent tribute the Chief has paid to us. My rabbinical colleagues and I know how invidious it is to have to speak following the Chief Rabbi, the master orator and thinker of our community. They are well aware that the odds of an anti-climax are very high. It is always a delight and an experience to listen to him at rabbinic gatherings and to read his articles and books, and I look forward to absorbing his inspiration – *min ha-tzad* – from the side benches, in the years ahead. In this context I should mention the late Rav Lord Jakobovits ztz”l who was such a friend, mentor and inspiration to me, and who is so greatly missed. Lehavdil bein chayyim lechayyim, may I say what a great pleasure it is to have Lady J with us today.

Having referred to rabbinical colleagues, may I say what a pleasure and privilege it is to have them and their wives with us today, as well as Dr Simon Hochauser and Rabbi Saul Zneimer representing the United Synagogue.

Communities are demanding entities, and even in a community like Stanmore with some 8000 souls, people understandably expect the rabbi to be able to drop everything and deal with their problem - even before it has surfaced. Frequently they imagine that Mosheh Rabbeinu bequeathed to every rabbi his special staff, with its miraculous powers. We are expected to explain theologically every tragedy, to heal every ailment and to entertain at every simchah. I have to say that occasionally we do find the congregant who is unusually solicitous for our welfare. Such a man was Abe, a very old man, who, one freezing night, with snow five inches on the ground, lay in his bed and sensed that his end was near. “Call the priest,” he shouted to Yenta, his wife of 60 years, “and tell him to come immediately.” “The priest? Abe you must be delirious. You mean the rabbi.” “No,” said Abe. I mean the priest. Why ask the rabbi to come out on such a freezing night?” Well, I also happen to be a priest. And maybe that is why my community has never had such qualms about troubling me!

So how have I managed to survive and service such a vast community as Stanmore? Well I can now disclose the answer. I had the benefit of a small, compact, extremely potent, fail-safe, secret weapon that the Mosad have been
desperately trying to enlist for years. It goes by the code name Gloria. And every
rabbi and community should have one. She is far more spiritual, public spirited,
caring and more perceptive about human nature than I could ever have aspired
to be. And, as you all know, she has always, and at all hours, shouldered the
burden of office as an equal partner. She would never rest until she was satisfied
that I had attended to all the myriad problems that had been passed to me each
day. I often thought she was a plant of the HE’s. No, not a plant. More a
beautiful bouquet.

The Stanmore Synagogue Community Care that she was instrumental in setting
up, and co-chaired with Roberta Epstein until recently, soon became an integral
and indispensable support agency, and constitutes an outstanding achievement of
this community and a role model and paradigm for many other US synagogues.
Gloria would especially like to join me in thanking all those who joined the initial
Steering committee, those who run that splendid organisation and all the
volunteers who have devoted themselves to its efforts over the years since its
inception. Gloria also served for 14 years as the voluntary co-ordinator of the
United Synagogue Chevra Kadisha, involving her in several hours work each day.
We are also fortunate to have had a vibrant Ladies Guild, currently under the Chairmanship of Anita Bloom, as well as many other vital committees, served by talented and devoted chairpersons and executives. It was a privilege to have worked with them all. Having referred to the Ladies Guild, may I just offer the prayer that Mrs Irene Goodman, who gave a lifetime of service to our shul, should be granted a refuah sheleimah. And speaking of Irene, I would like to say what a privilege it was for me to have known two of the founding fathers of this community, the late Harold Goodman and Alec Rozansky.

Secondly, we survived because of the indulgence of our children who shared us with the community. In their tender years, in Glasgow and Kenton, it was understandably, a grudging indulgence. When they became teenagers it frequently became transmuted into a heaven-sent one - to have mum and dad out of the way so frequently.

Thirdly, we survived because of the support of some wonderful colleagues, such as Rev Chaim Graniewitz and Dr Henry Black, and most talented younger colleagues, who took over the responsibility for looking after the younger members, notably Rabbi David Levin Krus and the greatly talented Rabbi Andrew Shaw, friend and tennis partner. I should like to thank Rabbi Melvyn Bloom for his inspiring shiurim and, together with Rev Dr Norman Gale, for deputising in ministerial duties whenever called upon. I have no doubt that much of the success of Stanmore, and the sense of unity and community that underpins this shul, may be attributed to the unity of purpose and friendship that characterised the relationship of the spiritual team at its helm.

And last, but by no means least, I was able to cope because of the support, respect and genuine concern for our welfare of successive generations of dedicated Honorary Executives, FRSs and wardens, as well as through the day-to-day help afforded me by our Administrator, Brenda, and by Anita, Rosemary and other previous members of her office team. To mention names is invidious, but I know that no one will take it amiss if I single out the indefatigable Mr Stanmore, my very dear friend, Ronnie Metzger who has been so solicitous for Gloria and my welfare, and who has been a wise adviser and sounding-board over these past twenty years, and who, together with Mrs Ruth Franks, has led the organisational teams for this weekend. I also thank Ronnie and his team for organising the testimonial on our behalf which is greatly appreciated.

A week is a long time in politics. 20 yrs is very long time in a community as active as Stanmore, and it would take far too long to chronicle all the events and changes that we have witnessed and helped to shape. My mind does go back, however, to the early years here when the cause of the liberation of Soviet Jewry was at the forefront of our concerns. I recall the shul trips to Israel that Gloria and I organised, and the various inspirational JIA missions that we led. Another highlight was the group visit to Netanya a few years ago to present a Magen David Adom ambulance on behalf of our community. Other home based highlights were the dedications of several Sifrei Torah, the youth room, the foyer area and the front landscaped gardens. And the personal and family events, which included the marriages of our children, our son Lewis’s Barmitzvah, and the launch of a large number of my books. At all times the friendship, encouragement and support of the shul has been total, and our family will take away many happy memories of this exceptional community.

We are currently in the middle of the four special shabbatot that lead into Pesach. These have a special resonance for me as a retiring rabbi. The first is Shabbat Shekalim which calls upon every Jew to make a contribution to the house of God. Since my earliest infancy that was my dream, to become a rabbi and to contribute of my strengths and abilities to the Synagogue and the community.
The second of the special Shabbatot is Parashat Zakhor, which happens to be my barmitzvah sidrah. Its forthright and doubly emphasized message Zakhor, ‘Remember what Amalek did,’ followed by al tishkach, ‘do not forget,’ impelled me at that tender age towards always adopting a courageous stand and speaking out fearlessly on issues that I felt deeply about.

The third special Shabbat is Parah, which deals with the purification rites for those impure through contact with the dead. The Red Heifer’s most mystifying regulation was that, while the impure person became pure as a result of that ritual, the Kohein who administered it, himself became impure. As a Kohein and a rabbi, I viewed this feature as a psychological insight into the role of the religious therapist. The person who came to the priest had probably become impure through having attended his own close relative who had died. He inevitably came to the priest laden with grief and frequently with spiritual confusion and doubts about God’s justice. The Kohein’s mission was not only to administer the external rites but also to offer comfort, advice, support and direction. The bereaved would hopefully leave the priest’s presence unburdened, with a measure of ease and comfort, symbolised by the status of ‘becoming pure.’ The priest, on the other hand, had absorbed much of the person’s angst and sorrow, fear and doubt. No sensitive spiritual leader could be immune to that. And hence the priest became symbolically ‘im-pure.’

As a rabbi and a Kohein, that Parah ritual was a powerful evocation of my vocation, teaching me never to become blasé, or, God-forbid, indifferent to the plight of my congregants, never to become a mere functionary. This inevitably brought with it many stresses and strains, as Gloria and I truly mourned with the bereaved, suffered with the sick, and agonised over the personal problems brought to us on a daily basis.

There follows Shabbat Parashat Ha-Chodesh, which this year has a special significance as Gloria and my valedictory Shabbat. It details the laws of the forthcoming festival of Pesach, the festival of liberation; and so speaks to us of our liberation from the privileged burden of leading this great community. Ha-Chodesh hazeh lakhem rosh chodashim – “This month is for you the beginning of the months,” Rishon hu lakhem, “It is the first for you of the months of the year.” This also is viewed by us as a personal message – lakhem addressed to us – with its optimistic cadences, offering a new beginning, a new phase in our lives, with the time to undertake and pursue new challenges and opportunities.

And finally there is Shabbat Ha-gadol, with its haftarah’s clarion call to Israel to look forward to a great future wherein we can expect to witness the harbinger of the Messiah. This reflects the philosophy of continuity, faith, optimism and eternity that are the hallmarks of our people, and which have carried us through the centuries of subjection and degradation to the modern period of return to our land, to a state of independence and a status of sovereignty, and, please God, to a future of peace, success and achievement, until the day when the steps of that messianic harbinger will be heard.

May you, my dear friends, and your loved ones, go from strength to strength. May this great kehillah become even greater under your new spiritual leader, Rabbi Lew, and may we all meet together at many happy events, in your families and in our community.
The Presentations

- Mr. Leslie Lipovich, together with Mr. Merrick Wolman and Counsellor Richard Romaine on behalf of the Rabbi Dr. Jeffrey Cohen Testimonial Fund

- Mr. David Glassman and Mr. Paul Dresner unveiled the portrait of Rabbi Dr. Jeffrey Cohen that now graces the wall of the Freeman Susman Hall staircase

- Rebetzin Anita Bloom on behalf of the Ladies Guild

- Mrs. Susan Starr on behalf of Stanmore Synagogue Community Care

- Mr. David Proops, Chairman of our Jewish Care and Local Charities Fund

- Mr. David Cohen, past London and Kol Nidre Appeal Chairman

- Mrs. Geena Turgel, Chairperson of our local Wizo Committee

- Professor Andrew Eder, Co-Chairman of our Youth Education Committee

- Our Warden Dr. Nigel de Kare-Silver proposed a vote of thanks

Dr Nigel de Kare-Silver

Chief Rabbi and Lady Elaine Sacks, Rabbonim, Lady Amelie, Dayan Ehrentroy, President and Honorary Officers of the United Synagogue, Distinguished guests Ladies and Gentleman

I would like to thank everyone for being here

I would like to thank our engaging speakers: led of course by the Chief Rabbi, Dr Simon Hochhauser, Rabbi Andrew Shaw and Mr Ronnie Meztger

I would like to thank my colleagues David Glassman and Peter Grossmark

Some particular individuals need to be formally thanked and mentioned for their unique contribution to this weekend

Brenda Dresner for manning the myriad of enquiries and work way beyond her normal duties, Paul Dresner for coordinating the technical aspects of the day Stewards and Security teams headed by Richard Hyams, Robin Leigh Philip Hertz and Steven Newfield.

Leslie Lipowicz, Merrick Wolman, Richard Romain who together with Ronnie organized and established the testimonial fund, David Taub for preparing the beautiful testimonial book
I would especially like to thank Lewis for so smoothly chairing proceedings this afternoon.

Above all special mention must be made of two people who have worked tirelessly over the past weeks and months preparing this wonderful day. Both pillars of this community.

Ruth Franks has devoted enormous effort into ensuring everything proceed so perfectly and together with Ronnie Metzger both have dedicatedly coordinated every aspect of this event with an unwavering attention to detail. Col Covod to you both. Col covod to all.

Rabbi Dr Jeffrey Cohen, in this week's Haftorah Isaiah gives account of the rebuilding and revival of Israel. Together with Gloria you have both uniquely contributed to the continued building of this community with untiring devotion and you will be for ever with us, and we forever in your debt.

On behalf of David. Ruth, Peter Lewis and myself and the whole of Stanmore & Canons Park Kehila I would like to thank you for your years of work and wish you many years of covod and hazak, happiness, good health and continued flourishing success.
Portrait by Charles Green
All other pictures by Godfrey Dyan