

HEADMASTER

TELEPHONE: 051-722 7496



THE KING DAVID HIGH SCHOOL
CHILDWALL ROAD
LIVERPOOL
L15 6UZ

To whom it may concern

May, 1977

Rabbi Dr. Chaim Simons

Rabbi Simons was appointed Director of Jewish Studies at this School in Dec. 1971. Although his previous experience of teaching was very limited, he at once set to work to produce syllabuses for our 350 Jewish pupils, who vary in age from eleven to eighteen years and embrace a wide range of intelligence and commitment to Judaism. These syllabuses were meticulous and detailed. From the start, Rabbi Simons laid great emphasis on audio-visual aids and pursued enquiries as to available materials from all possible sources. His list of these materials has been consulted by other educational institutions in this country. He has also made a point of visiting other schools so as to profit from their procedures.

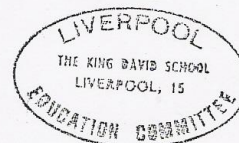
He was mainly instrumental in promoting special syllabuses and examinations in Religious Knowledge, at O-level with the Joint Matriculation Board of the Northern Universities, and for the Certificate of Secondary Education. In respect of the latter, he has been responsible for setting and marking the papers.

He has organized annual School events - Model Seder, celebration of Purim, Yom Yerushalayim and many others. Under his direction, pupils have produced magazines. On two occasions he arranged and led parties of about twenty boys for 4-day 'seminars' at a hostel. The programme involved shiurim, games and excursions as well as the practical aspects of observing kashrut and other dinim in a non-jewish environment. He has also given assistance with general School events such as athletics meetings.

Rabbi Simons has a keen analytical mind which enables him to grasp rapidly complex organizational problems and to work out solutions. He is energetic and can be relied upon to pursue his objectives forcefully and with sustained drive.

Yours sincerely,

Headmaster





בס"ד

ישיבת דבר ירושלים
The Jerusalem Academy of Jewish Studies

Yeshivat Dvar Yerushalayim

20th July, 1977.
5th Av, 5737.

Rabbi Dr. C. Simons,
80 Childwall Valley Road,
Childwall,
Liverpool 16,
England.

Dear Rabbi Dr. Simons,

I wish to thank you very much indeed for sending me your articles and book which are very impressive indeed.

We would be interested, in principle, to have you here to direct an audio-visual aid centre integrated with our general programme to participate in our teachers' training course, as well as to do other teaching here. However, we would not be able to finalise, and put forward any concrete proposal without meeting. Please let us know when you are coming here.

Yours sincerely,

Rabbi B. Horovitz,
Dean.

BE/MD

Programs in English,
Hebrew, Russian,
French and Spanish

Part-time and
Summer Courses;
College Credits Offered

Kollel and Research
Department; Ulpan;
Teacher-training Program

Jerusalem Academy
Publications;
Jewish Study Magazine

The great education debate (2)

Rabbi Dr. Chaim Simons was Director of Jewish Studies at King David High School from the end of 1971 until he went on Aliyah a few weeks ago.

He has studied in Israeli Yeshivot. He holds the degrees of Bachelor of Science — first class honours, Doctor of Philosophy in chemistry from London University and the Bachelor of Philosophy in educational technology from the Open University.

Rabbi Simons was one of the Hebron settlers who lived in the Hebron Military Compound between 1968 and 1971. He has now returned to Kiryat Arba-Hebron.

In my interview with Mr. [redacted] he appeared to look favourably on the idea of a Middle School, although on economic grounds he believed that, at present, it was not a viable proposition. What are your views on a Middle School?

For the present situation in Liverpool, the most crucial age in a child's Jewish education is from the start of Junior School right through to the first three years of the High School. After that stage, our pupils start specialisation and become concerned with their external examinations. It is, therefore, most essential that there should be a continuity in Jewish education over these six or seven years. It thus follows that for religious instruction a Middle School is ideal, because otherwise there is going to be a break at the crucial age of eleven.

We should note here that almost without exception, all the Jewish pupils from the Primary School enter the High School. We therefore, have a wonderful opportunity, for, having such a break at the age of eleven in religious education by implementing the Foundation's recommendation that my successor should be given the Directorate of Jewish Studies over both schools. This is the case with the King David schools, Manchester, where the Director of Jewish Studies looks after the children's education from the age of five to eighteen, and with Leeds which has one Director over the Primary and Middle Schools.

This is all very well, but should there be a break in a child's Jewish education? Surely, you have got every opportunity, at hand, to see what goes on in the Primary School, and there, therefore, should be a natural flow in Jewish education, even without a Middle School?

There is no substitute for having one person directing throughout the two schools. Different people have different ideas. Indeed, two people can have different ideas and they can both be correct, but the fact that they have different ideas, is disadvantageous to the pupils. We also have a complete change in staff for their Jewish Studies at the age of eleven. In secular subjects this could be an advantage, but as far as Jewish education is concerned, it is a pity, and I feel that, there is no substitute for an overall direction throughout the ages of five to eighteen.

Are you happy with the curriculum for the first few years of the High School? Are there any changes here that you might suggest to your successor?

We are always experimenting in syllabuses. Education must never be static. It must always be dynamic. We are continually looking for new ideas, and in the Jewish Studies Department there has been a recent important innovation in that pupils have been asked for their views on the courses they have studied and suggestions for any changes. We have found that even pupils of the age of eleven, have discussed such matters in a mature way.

What is your opinion of the Barmitzva and Eshet Chayil examinations and courses? Are they suitable for every pupil?

I believe that this is one of the fields in which we particularly excel. With your permission, can I mention here four ways in which we believe that this school leads all other Jewish schools in this country.

(1) The Barmitzva and Eshet Chayil courses. At the end of it there is a searching examination, and the standard seems to improve year-by-year. This year there were

no fewer than twenty-four distinctions attained by candidates — thirteen boys and eleven girls. To gain a distinction, a pupil cannot afford to throw away many marks in this examination.

(2) The use of audio-visual materials. We have made a survey of the materials which are available, and the best of them have been integrated into our courses. We utilise film-strips, slides, cassettes, models, and we find that the pupils, when they actually feel, hear, or see something, absorb the knowledge and enjoy it more than if they simply see the printed word. The Jewish Studies Room, in fact, was designed with this new outlook in mind. For example, prior to this room being available, we were using the pottery room for koshering chickens in the Eshet Chayil course. Now, we have our own facilities, with hot water and a draining board. In this room, we also have a display cabinet, and facilities for slide and film equipment. In fact, the room was designed with this audio-visual in mind.

(3) The 4th and 5th Forms. We have Jewish orientated O Level and C.S.E. syllabuses and examinations in religious education, which have been accepted by the External Examination Boards. Indeed, other Jewish schools and institutions in Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield and Cardiff utilise our O Level syllabus. Were it not for the geographical boundaries of the External Examination Boards, I am almost certain that places in London would have taken up this course.

In these examinations, the results of our pupils have been getting better over the last five years or so, and last year 87% of all the Jewish pupils in the 5th form, gained a pass in either O Level or C.S.E.

(4) The 6th Form course on how to counter anti-Israel propaganda.

Harris Polak
interviews Rabbi
Dr. C. Simons

As we all know, there has been a massive increase in Arab propaganda on the university campuses, and we have found that the majority of students are not equipped to answer all this propaganda. Thus, we have introduced this course and written our own booklet, which has been distributed to the pupils, and some of our pupils who left school last year, have been successfully defending the Zionist cause on the campuses. There has, in fact, been a large demand from various student and other bodies for this booklet.

One of the criticisms levelled at your department is that you lay too much stress throughout the school on religious studies, and not enough emphasis on Israel.

We have courses from the 5th Form upwards on Zionism and modern Jewish history, including the Holocaust. However, I feel that, it would be wrong to introduce these subjects in the First Form since the pupils at that stage do not have a sufficient basis to truly appreciate them. Also, these kind of subjects are far better covered in a later year, because if they are taught from the First Year upwards, by the time the pupil reaches the Fifth Year, his interest in these subjects will have waned. They should be a novelty to the pupils and ought to be taught at an age when they are mature enough to understand the meaning of the courses.

Is religious education an academic subject?

It depends how one defines academic! It is not a secular subject, but it is academic in the sense that we are teaching facts. Religious education is also teaching a way of life. In order to know a way of life, you must begin by knowing the facts. One cannot appreciate Judaism as a way of life unless one is educated it. Therefore, it is both an academic subject and a way of life.

What is your answer to pupil apathy when they leave school? Why are they anti-institutional? Who is to blame?

This is a factor which does not apply only to the Jewish field, but it also applies in the Christian world. In today's society the environmental factors will make young people anti-institutional, anti-this, anti-that.

But is the school powerless to rectify this? Surely, the principal reason for a Jewish school is to make Judaism tangible for the Jewish youth?

It is really a question of relativity. We must ask ourselves, what attitude would the pupils take, were there not a Jewish school. However, it must be remembered that children are only school for a few hours a day, five days a week, term-time only. The majority of the time they are not in school, and even within the school day, they are only for a very few hours a week in what might be called the "Jewish Studies Framework". So it is virtually impossible that they will not leave school apathetic, taking into account the many alien influences.

Could more time within the timetable for Jewish Studies help in any way?

Obviously, more time devoted to Jewish Studies, especially from the 6th Year upwards would be beneficial.

How do you react to parental criticism?

Can I make it clear that I have always been happy to talk to parents, but I wish the parents would come along to talk to me. There are always those parents who go along to meetings, simply to criticise, because that is their nature. However, when an opportunity arises for constructive criticism, as a parent's consultation evening, for example, these very same parents are absent.

Why?

It comes back to the theme I have been talking about — the environment. Maybe the parents did not have the opportunities which their children are now getting, and, therefore, they don't appreciate religious instruction. It is very difficult to pinpoint an exact reason, but obviously, if the parents are apathetic, the children are going to be apathetic.

Yet, when their child marries out, they might blame the school, perhaps they will blame themselves.

No, they will not blame themselves. They will blame the school, they will blame the Jewish Studies teachers, they will blame the Rabbis. They will blame everyone but themselves.

What is your view of Harold House? Is it detrimental to meet with non-Jewish children outside school, in a social atmosphere?

This problem really arises from the fact this school is too big for the community. Jewish children will meet non-Jewish friends in school, and the inevitable sequel will be that they will want to go after school in Harold House. It is a serious problem, especially when the rate of marriage in Anglo-Jewish circles is taken into account.

As yet, Liverpool has not suffered the hardship which has afflicted other provincial communities, the polarisation of the community into extreme orthodox on the one hand and reform on the other.

The Gemara says, that the destruction of the Temple was given to the fools and the children! Should such a situation arise here, I could answer the question.

In the years of your tenure of Liverpool, you have been a source of inspiration to the Youth Movement.

The Youth Mitzva is one of the best voluntary Jewish activities in Liverpool. No one is forced to go, yet the attendance is constantly increasing. Our youth go every week and conduct the services and the livening by themselves. It is really pleasing to see the enthusiasm of the youth and how they have taken the Mitzva, and their commitment, efforts to ensure that they will continue to receive the correct guidance in the future.

To return finally to the theme of the emphasis of teaching in the type of education offered?

We are always looking for suggestions as to how to improve Jewish education. Ideally, we would be a disaster to the parent, and to feel that they have reached the highest standard possible. We must never say that regarding Jewish education.

Now that you are going to Israel, do you have a final message for the children of Liverpool?

To the pupils I would say, allow your leaving of the Jewish school to be the end of Jewish education. Ideally, you should spend some time in a Yeshiva or Seminary. You have a regular period in your games for Torah study. You are satisfied with what you have learned. Always look for ways to improve yourselves.

P.O. 2
86 Childwall Valley Rd
Liverpool 16

23rd July, 78

J. Smartt Esq.
Chairman
Staff Association
King David High School
Liverpool 15

Dear Mr. Smartt,

Please convey my
sincere thanks to the Staff for their
kind presentation.

I shall always remember
the understanding and positive attitude
of the secular staff towards the
Jewish character of the School.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely,
Chaim Simons

Letters of thanks I wrote

H. Larks Esq.
Chairman of Governors
King David High School
Liverpool 15

2007
86 Childwall Valley Rd
Liverpool 16

23rd July 78

Dear Mr Larks,

Please convey my sincere
thanks to the Governors for their kind
presentation.

I feel sure that this
briefcase will come in very useful to
carry my books when I commute between
Hebron and Jerusalem.

Wishing the school every success
in the future.

Yours sincerely,
Chaim Simons

wrote on leaving the School.

7"07
86 Childwall Valley Rd
Liverpool 16

23rd July 78

N. Heller Esq
Chairman
Childwall Hebrew Congregation

Dear Mr. Heller,

Please convey my sincere
thanks to your Shool for their kind
presentation and Kiddush.

It has been a great pleasure
to be able to assist the Childwall Synagogue
during my stay in Liverpool.

Please also thank the Ladies'
Guild for preparing the Kiddush.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely,
(Rabbi D.) Chaim Simons

Letter of thanks I wrote to Childwall Synagogue.

Liverpool rabbi bids farewell

From our Correspondent
Liverpool

Rabbi Dr Chaim Simons, director of Jewish Studies at the Liverpool King David High School since 1971, has relinquished his post and has left to settle in Kiryat Arba, Hebron, with his family.

Rabbi Simons will be setting up and directing an audio-visual centre at the Jerusalem Academy for Jewish Studies to produce materials for the teaching of Jewish subjects.

At a farewell kiddush held after the annual youth service last Shabbat at Childwall Synagogue, the chairman, Mr N. N. Heller, making a symbolic presentation to Rabbi Simons, praised his work for the youth minyan and paid tribute to him for his work for the congregation over the past few years.