Rabbi Stanley Davids: In Memoriam

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By Rabbi Marc D. Angel

Rabbi Stanley Davids, a prominent Reform rabbi, passed away on Sunday night March 23, 2025. Although we differed significantly on religious matters, we were good friends for many years.

Stanley served as rabbi of Central Synagogue in Manhattan from 1986-1991, after which he became rabbi of Temple Emanu-El in Atlanta. He was active in many communal endeavors, including years as head of ARZA.

When we were both serving congregations in Manhattan, we found ourselves working together in various communal endeavors. Stanley was always affable, sensible and deeply committed to the wellbeing and unity of the Jewish People. That he was Reform and I was Orthodox did not get in the way of our mutual respect and fellowship. As human beings—and as Jews—we had many shared ideas, ideals and aspirations.

Stanley regularly made his way from Central Synagogue to Shearith Israel where we studied Rambam together. We kept in touch after he moved from Manhattan, and we even had lunch together in Jerusalem after he and his wife made Aliyah. We published an article by him in our Institute's journal, Conversations, https://www.jewishideas.org/article/everything-there-time, and he published an article of mine in a book he co-edited, https://www.jewishideas.org/node/3239. We shared significant occasions, professionally and personally.

Yes, it was (and hopefully still is) possible for an Orthodox rabbi and a Reform rabbi to study Torah together, to work together on behalf of the Jewish community and Israel, to enjoy a genuine friendship. In an increasingly divisive world, we gain from friendships that overcome differences and focus on shared values.

We extend condolences to Stanley's wife, Resa, and to the entire Davids family. Min Hashamayim Tenuhamu.