



IKAR's Hannukah Reflection "What Love Is"

From the time he was a child, Avi cared deeply for Israel and dreamt of serving in the Israel Defense Forces. As soon as he turned 18, he made aliyah and served with distinction as a combat soldier, eventually training elite units in counter-terrorism. After three years, he returned to the United States to study International Relations and Middle East Studies at Brown University.

Avi was a fierce advocate for the Jewish State and deeply committed to peace with the Palestinians. 'I have a dream of peace,' he once wrote. 'I desire it more than anything, and have devoted my life to it.'

In his first few months at Brown, Avi worked to create space for authentic dialogue between people with differing views on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He quickly became known as a voice of reason and compassion. He called himself a 'soldier for peace,' writing 'I went to the army so that my children will not have to,' a dream he said he feared might not come true.

Avi's life was tragically cut short in February of 2010 when he was hit by a drunk driver while walking back to his dorm room on campus.

Avi's family responded to their grief by establishing a Fund in his name and in his memory, dedicated to promoting the values and ideals that inspired Avi in his lifetime: empathy, mutual respect and active listening. Leagues of students have already benefitted from the work of the Fund, which brings Israelis and Palestinians together to establish personal relationships, in an effort to manifest the teaching at the heart of Avi's work, which he learned from his father: 'An enemy is someone whose story you have not yet heard.'

'In just 21 years, Avi became a living testament to the idea that one committed individual can truly make a difference. His example leaves an indelible mark on this world in the lives of the people who knew him, and the thousands more inspired by his legacy of activism and compassion.' Tonight, let's honor Avi's memory, and reaffirm the power of one - one who lives with love and passion, with deep commitment and great aspirations - to inspire many.

And may his memory be a blessing.

Rabbi Sharon Brous