

# “Families and Magic”

By Rabbi David Wolpe

In the *Shema* we are commanded to love God. What are we then to do with that love? Should we love God and therefore conquer the world? Love God and live in perfect purity?

No, we are told to love God and teach our children. Speak these words when walking, lying down, in all the humble ways of ordinary life. This is the sacred quotidian — not to be mountaintop saints, but to live every day with love.

Auden wrote that the old masters knew of suffering, that it takes place “when someone else is eating or opening a window or just walking dully along.” Real life, suffering and spirit, is a product of dailyness.

All the wizardry and wonder of the Harry Potter books (slight spoiler here) end in parents sending children off to school. In family the magic of this world finds its fullest expression. Unlike the great mythic children’s books of Lewis or Tolkien, there is a Torah echo in Rowling’s ending; great struggles of good and evil are real and vital, but in the end they matter so that learning and tenderness and love do not end with us. The family table is a sacred altar, and in the strains of the *Shema* sung to a child at night is all the epic poetry of the ages.