

# A History of Love

**BY RABBI DAVID WOLPE**

The first time the word "love" occurs in the Bible is when God instructs Abraham to take his son Isaac, "whom you love," to the mountain as a sacrifice. The next time is when we are told Isaac loves his wife Rebecca. That love comforts Isaac over the death of his mother Sarah.

Does being loved by our parents as children enable us to love as adults? That is one of the Bible's messages. But surely there is too the painful truth that love entails loss. Love is joy, and wonder and passion; but it is also the prefigured whisper of loss: what you cherish cannot stay forever.

Isaac's love comes partly from the hole in his heart left by the loss of a parent. We do not only love from strength; we also love from our frailties and our pain.

Did Isaac, late in a private, star sewn night, tell Rebecca of his experience on the altar? Did the loves in his life — parents, wife and child — together form a coherent tapestry of loss and love? In old age Isaac went blind. The Rabbis imagine that while bound on Mount Moriah the tears of angels fell into his eyes. Apparently angels, too, know how to love, for they can cry.