

# Love and Sacrifice

BY RABBI DAVID WOLPE

The first mention of love in the Torah occurs when God tells Abraham to offer up Isaac, "whom you love." (Gen. ch. 22) Why should The Torah choose this improbable moment to mention love for the first time? For a moment let us set aside all the other questions involved in the very difficult story to ponder why love is introduced here.

What is the Torah's deep teaching? All love has an element of sacrifice. The Hebrew word for sacrifice, *Korban*, comes from the root "to draw close." When you sacrifice for another you draw close to them. One of the reasons, perhaps the principle reason, we so treasure our children is we have given them so much. The idea is suggested in the very word for the Isaac story in Hebrew: "*Akedah*" — binding.

Love asks of us: in speech and silence, in need and negation. We do not only sacrifice for children; to be betrothed in Jewish tradition one must offer a gift; all relationship requires willingness to give. To love another as friend, family, partner, you must make an offering of yourself. When we ask whether someone is in love we often ask "what do you feel?" We might better ask, "What would you give?"