

How can I show I love them?

A Jewish story

Key Ideas: creation, the natural world, God's relationship with people

It was finished! God smiled at his creation. He loved the sun and moon, the mountains and woods, the wind and fire, rivers, animals: and especially he loved men and women, made in his image. He called representatives from the natural world to a great meeting.

'You know I love you!'

'Yes!'

'Only men and women do not yet know that I love them. Who will go and tell them?'

Me ... me ... me ... me ...'

Splashing water caught his attention. The angels called for silence.

'Why do you think you can show people how much I love them?'

'Because they need me - to drink, to make plants grow for food and flowers for their delight, to keep the animals and birds alive. When they taste me and see all I do, they will know that such a gift means that you love them and they will love you in return.'

So water came down to earth and men and women recognised that God loved them. They looked after him and cared for him whenever they could. But gradually they began to take him for granted. They polluted the rivers and seas, cut down forests and did not replant, creating deserts and floods and disease. They were bad stewards of God's world. So God called water back home. Then the wind cried:

'Send me!'

'Why should you succeed when water has failed?'

'I will bring coolness in the heat of the day, and if they forget me, I will blow strongly and remind them of your love.'

So wind came down to earth. At first the people enjoyed his soft touch and thanked God. If they began to forget him, the wind blew and blew and they remembered him again. But one day they forgot him altogether. They couldn't actually see wind and so they forgot his message. Perhaps, thought God, he would never be able to convince men and women of his love.

One day, cloud stood before him.

'Send me,' he whispered.

'Why should I send you?' said God.

'Because I can give both mist and rain for water and also create a gentle breeze to cool them in the heat of the day and night - AND - I can be seen!'

So cloud came down to earth. For many years he reminded people of God's love. But sometimes the sun was so hot that cloud disappeared. Often the nights were clear and bright and cloud could not compete. Once again, men and women gradually forgot his message. So God called cloud back home.

For many years the people lived their lives not knowing that God loved and cared for them, waiting to be part of their lives, waiting to be loved in return. Then, one day, bread slipped quietly into the room and stood before his creator.

'Many of your people are hungry and starving. Now they are saying that YOU have forgotten THEM! Let me go to them as a sign of your love. They need me every day. They can share me with each other. They will not be able to forget my message.'

Could that really be true? Perhaps ... And so bread came down to earth and every day men and women shared in his nourishment and remembers that God loved and cared for them and wanted them to invite him into their hearts and lives. Especially they remembered him as evening fell on Shabbat and as they thanked God for sending them bread, many resolved to care for the world which he had given them.