

# Care Close

**BY RABBI DAVID WOLPE**

In his book *Ambition* Joseph Epstein points out that a large percentage of tax fraud is reported by the business associates and “friends” of the offenders. Indignation is peaked most often by those with whom we are close. As comedian Kathy Landsman says, holidays when we gather with our families are “chances to renew resentments afresh.”

From ancient to modern times the sharpest clashes are among lovers, friends and families. The Jewish legal principle “when something is frequent and another thing infrequent, the frequent takes precedence” is contrary to our inclinations. We celebrate the rare, the exceptional, the unusual. But the tradition is teaching us that we should care most for what is closest to us: those people who give color to our daily lives.

Repeatedly as a Rabbi I have seen sad and painful breaks in formerly intimate relationships. Often it is because the participants did not tend to those relationships with the care they offered fresh acquaintances. New Facebook friends are not lifelong companions. Too easily do we give them our best and take those who are close for granted. The silences and resentments that result highlight the breach — for what was once inexpressibly near can suddenly seem unutterably far. Care close.