

Rabbi David Wolpe's

Off The Pulpit

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Hate Your Brother?

Famously, we are told to, "Love your neighbor as yourself." But in the preceding verse we are advised, "Do not hate your brother in your heart." (Lev. 19:17-18) Why are we commanded to love our neighbor and only commanded not to hate our brother?

Rabbi Yosef Dov ha-Levi Soloveitchik explained that the Torah does not command things which are natural to us. It is natural to love one's brothers, or one's parents, and so it is not the subject of a command. To love one's neighbor takes more work. However, when that natural love is disturbed, as we see in many families, hatred sometimes takes its place. The Torah warns against this terrible twist of emotion.

Every Rabbi has seen families torn apart from a

failure to heed this admonition. Businesses created by a parent are destroyed through children's rivalries. Inheritance or unequal affection from parents becomes the wedge, driving otherwise loving family members, apart. Many of the most pitiless battles in society are fought not between strangers, but between members of the same family.

At times I think God gave us families to teach us how to live with people we might not otherwise befriend. For the lucky among us, affection flows naturally and easily. For others, the Torah is there to remind us not to hate those whom we are intended to love.

[A Mother's Day Story](#)