

“Passover and Parenting”

By Rabbi David Wolpe

On Passover children ask questions and parents provide the answers. At times parents must also learn to stop providing answers.

The mystical concept of *tsimtsum* posits God’s self-limitation in order to create the world. For anything else to come into being there had to be a space of not-God, a space available for creation to flourish.

God’s limitation with the world is a paradigm for parenting. Psychologists report that college students are finding it difficult to cope with independent life because parents have coddled and cared for them. The caring is out of love, but wise love involves not only assistance, but stepping away, the human equivalent of *tsimtsum*. Can you do your child’s laundry and homework, fight his fights, argue with her teacher, choose his dinner and her date? Perhaps. But is that supportive or disabling?

When the Israelites reach the sea and Moses cries out to God, God responds, “Why are you crying out to Me? Go forward!” (Ex. 14:15) Those first steps were frightening, but all freedom is frightening, risky, and absolutely essential. God’s limitation created the world; ours, if we are wise, can create independent human beings. Our children will make mistakes, to be sure. As I recall, so did we.