

Rabbi David Wolpe's

Off The Pulpit

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Tzimtzum

The mystics speak of Tzimtzum, withdrawal or contraction. God, who fills all, contracts into God's self to allow space for the world to be created. Tzimtzum is a concept in theological physics, teaching what it means to limit oneself to enable creation.

It is also a lesson in human psychology. We too create space within ourselves, within our lives. The lesson of Tzimtzum is that withdrawal precedes overflow; the cistern bursts forth in a fountain. Moses withdraws for forty days up the mountain and comes down to teach. Rabbi Akiba leaves for years to study and returns to become the Gadol Hador, the great one of his generation.

There are moments in life to expand, and stretch beyond our usual capacities. But we learn from this powerful mystical concept how important it is now and again to contract, to make smaller, to withdraw. In a world that fills our minds and our time the ability is increasingly important. God created a space to make the world. We make a space inside ourselves to let the world in. Then we can open to give more of ourselves to our world.