

Taking Center Stage: The Proper Place of the Bima

Adapted from a shiur by Rav Yehoshua

Grunwald on *Parshas*

Tetzaveh

ועשית מזבח מקטר קטורת ונתת אותו לפני הפרכת אשר על ארון העדות (שמות ל:א,ו)

The Rambam (*Tefilla*

11:13) rules that we place the *bima* in the middle of the shul so that

everyone can

hear the *baal*

korei read the Torah.

Can you ever place

the *bima* on

the side?

- *Kesef Mishneh* — If the shul is built in a way where all can hear, it's permitted.
- *Chasam Sofer* (28) and *Meshiv Davar* (15) – The *bima* must always be in the center:
 - The *bima* is in place of the *mizbeach* (altar) since we read the *parshiyos* of *korbanos* there.
 - We circle the *bima* on Sukkos with our *lulav* the same way as they circled the *mizbeach* in the *Beis Hamikdash*.
 - The *mizbeach hapenimi* (inner altar) was situated in the center of the *Kodesh*, directly opposite the *Aron Kodesh* in the *Kodesh Kodashim*, so our *bima* should also be in the center.
- *Igros Moshe* (O.C. 1:42, O.C. 2:41-42) – Disagrees in principle with the *Chasam Sofer*
 - Most *korbanos* were offered on the *mizbeach hachitzon* (the outer one) in the *azara* (courtyard), not the *penimi*.
 - They circled the *mizbeach hachitzon* with the *lulav*, not the *penimi*.
 - Main issue is that everyone should be able to hear the Torah read, and if they can, it is permitted to place it off-center.
 - But he says if possible, comply with the *Chasam Sofer* even if we don't understand him, but close to the center is acceptable.
 - One may *daven* in a shul that has an off-center *mechitza*, but if there are two shuls, it is preferable to go to the other.