

The Shofar at the Bima

Rosh haShana – Rabbi Jay Weinstein

We are all anxiously awaiting Rosh haShana and the opportunity to hear the blowing of the shofar. Rabbi Moshe Isserles (known as the "Rema"), born in Cracow in 1530, is responsible for recording many of the traditions of Ashkenazi Jews. He records the custom that the representative who blows the shofar on behalf of the congregation, should stand at the *bima* from where the Torah is read. This is a bit strange. Shouldn't the shofar be blown in the place where the *chazzan* stands or perhaps close to the Ark where the Torah scrolls are kept? Why should the shofar specifically be blown at the *bima*?

Rabbi Israel Meir haCohen Kagan (known as the "Chafetz Chaim"), author of the Mishna Berura, explains the reason. It is in order that the merit of the Torah will protect us and will help our shofar blowing be accepted in a positive way.

The *bima* is the place where the Torah is read from in a public forum. It represents the idea of *Talmud Torah b'tzibbur* - the COMMUNITY coming together to hear and learn the words of the Torah. Learning the ancient words of our Bible and studying age-old texts from our tradition carries with it a special power of helping our prayers reach up to the Heavens.

Our goal in the Community Kollel of Dallas is to unite the entire Jewish community together through the common bond of studying Torah. As we go into Rosh haShana, we should remember the message of the shofar being blown at the *bima* and make a commitment to Torah study for this coming year. May we all be blessed with a *Shana Tova*!



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