



# Honor In Place

THE REBBE'S SHABBOS PLACE

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*Ed. note: For easier navigation of the various locations described throughout this article, please refer back to "A Chassidisher Derher" Issue 30 (107) pg. 40 and the diagram on pg. 42.*

The Rebbe had various places in *shul* for davening; for some *tefillos* the Rebbe would be at one place and for others at a different place. And of course, over the years, the Rebbe's place changed several times; either due to the various expansions or other events at 770.

From the beginning of the *nesius* until 5748, the Rebbe generally davened the weekday *tefillos* in the upstairs *shul*, also known as the small *zal*. During

those years, the designated place for *mincha* and *maariv* on weekdays was the northeastern<sup>1</sup> corner of the room; between the *aron kodesh* and the door of the *zal* leading to the foyer of 770.

One of the exceptions to this, was *mincha* on *erev Shabbos*, which—as we see in the colored picture here—the Rebbe *davened* at his *Shabbos* place, in the southeastern corner of the room, which is along the wall between the *zal* and the *cheder sheni*. ▶▶▶





JEM/THE LIVING ARCHIVE

### IMPROPER CONDUCT?

As the space in 770 was always maximized to serve in many different capacities, the *zal* upstairs served primarily as the main study hall of the yeshiva of 770. It was abuzz with voices and discussions at all hours of the day and night, only pausing for<sup>2</sup> *tefillos*, many of which the Rebbe attended, either in part or entirely. Before the Rebbe entered, the bochorim sitting at the table where the Rebbe would sit for davening, quickly got up and cleared away the *seforim* for the Rebbe. After davening, the room naturally reverted to its former form, and along with it the space the Rebbe used during *mincha* and *maariv* on weekdays would once again be filled with bochorim learning, and their *seforim*.

In 5742, a guest who had come to spend the month of Tishrei with the Rebbe, noticed this, and wrote a *ha'orah* in the kovetz *Haoros Hatmimim V'Anash* of Morristown, New Jersey, in which he raised the halachic question about a *talmid* not sitting in the *makom kavua* of his rav.

### “MY MAKOM KAVUA”

The guest may not have been aware, but the Rebbe would often read many of the haoros written by bochorim and anash, and would later quote some of the discussions by farbrengens; either expounding on their questions, challenging them, or even answering them.

Shortly after Tishrei, at the farbrengen on Shabbos Parshas Lech Lecha 5742,<sup>3</sup> the Rebbe introduced the above discussion of whether or not it was permissible for a *talmid* to sit in the place of his rav and offered a fascinating explanation.

The crux of the explanation was that of the two places—the Shabbos place in the south-east part of the shul, and the place for *mincha* and *maariv* on weekdays—it was only the Shabbos place on the southeastern corner that could be considered a true *makom kavua*, and thus subject to the regulations enumerated in Shulchan Aruch, such as not occupying it while the *rav* is not present, etc.

Whereas the *mincha* and *maariv* place, the Rebbe explained, was not an actual *makom kavua*, and was chosen simply out of technical need—to avoid having to walk across the room, causing “*tircha detzibura*,” inconvenience for the public (since everyone would naturally stand as the Rebbe was walking).

Then the Rebbe added that studying Torah must be conducted in a state of physical comfort and with ample space. Seeing as the student body is a large one and the room is not quite as much, designating a certain spot to be off limits would create discomfort and lessen the already limited space available for the *bochurim*, thereby being uncondusive to proper *limmud haTorah*; it would counter the will of the very individual whose place is being guarded (i.e. the Rebbe), and would thus be defeating its own purpose.<sup>4</sup>

#### WHY SOUTH?

The Rebbe explained, that those<sup>5</sup> who were meticulous about maintaining a consistent place for davening, had their *makom kavua* on the southeastern side of the room. Drawing from the Zohar on the *parsha*, the Rebbe elucidated the connection between *darom* (south) and *shacharis*,

which is the main *tefillah* offered on Shabbos in that space.

Nevertheless, preempted the Rebbe, the reason for sitting at *darom* according to *kabbalah*, is no implication that all must do so. Rather, it is a practice reserved for select few, and not to be adopted by the masses; instead, for the sake of decorum each must continue to occupy the place he’d had thus far, across the entire shul. **T**

1. Any references to the points of the compass, is on the understanding that the side of the *aron kodesh* is *mizrach* (east); the wall between the *zal* and the *cheder sheni* is *darom* (south); the wall with the *chatzer* is *maarav* (west), and the wall between the *zal* and *cheder mazkirus* is *tzafon* (north).

2. For many years, the Rebbe sat on a bench for *mincha* and *maariv* (until a removable cushion was added), which further underscores the difference between this place and the place used on Shabbos, where the Rebbe used a chair, brought there especially for him.

3. See Hivaaduyos 5742, Vol. 1 pg. 393

4. The idea the Rebbe explained is that the urge to protect the Rebbe’s space stems out of a drive for *kavod* to him, but since “רצונו של אדם זה הוא כבודו,” “[The execution of] one’s will [affords] him his true honor,” it follows that the way to offer *kavod* to the Rebbe, is by allowing *bochurim* more space to learn.

5. *Ed. note: probably referring to Rabboseinu Nesienu.*

