

## PROCEDURE WHEN REMOVING TORAH FROM ARK

### Overview

In our shule (Sinai Synagogue) every Shabos, right after the chazzan takes out of the Torah from the ark, he turns to the congregation and recites 3 passages printed in bold in the siddur: The first is Shma. The second is Echad Elokeainu. And then he turns to the ark and bows and says the 3<sup>rd</sup> passage -- Gadlu. And our entire congregation bows along with the chazzan. Now when I first saw this when I started davening at Sinai Synagogue, I found it interesting. Because in all other shules, ONLY the chazzan bows, NOT the congregation. To understand who is right (our congregation that bows with the chazan or the other congregations that don't bow with the chazan), I read what the rabbinical authorities had to say on the matter. It turns out we are ALL wrong.

Of all the authorities that address the matter, no one mentions **bowing** at all. They say only that the chazan should **raise** the Torah upon reciting each of the 3 sentences. This makes more sense than bowing, especially for the last sentence ("Gadlu...") which states "and let us elevate His name together".

I think I know how the custom of bowing got started. I will describe it with the following imaginary scenario: Perhaps a few centuries ago, a rabbi took out a Torah that was too heavy for him to raise. When he got to the 3<sup>rd</sup> sentence of Gadlu, he unintentionally hunched down under the strain of trying to lift the Torah. One of the congregants whispered to his friend "Hey, what is the rabbi doing?" His friend replied "I don't know. It looks like he is bowing down. I guess that's what we're supposed to do when we take out the Torah, because the rabbi should know." "Yeah, but why is the rabbi bowing to **us**. Shouldn't he turn around and bow to **Gd**?" "Yeah; I guess so" And from then on, chazans starting bowing to the ark when saying Gadlu. And a couple centuries later, when the custom arrived at Sinai Synagogue, the congregants saw the chazan bowing to the ark and they looked at each other and shrugged their shoulders and said "I guess that's what we're supposed to do" and they started bowing to the ark too. And that is how the custom probably got started.

### Background Details

The details, which are too complex to mention in my speech are as follows: Both the **Tur** 134:? and **M'S (Meseches Sofrim?**, quoted by **Magen Avraham** 134: sifkatan4) make no mention of turning around or bowing; they instead say the chazan should just raise the Torah when saying each of the 3 passages. **Chulchan Aruch** 134:2 doesn't mention the chazan saying or doing anything when taking out the Torah (only when returning it). **Rama** 134:2 mentions **saying** only Gadlu and **doing** nothing. says the chazan should raise the Torah for each of the 3 passages. But no one suggests anyone bowing.