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Pesach **Seder Etiquette: The Ultimate Civics Lesson**

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The order of the Seder follows the etiquette of a Roman banquet including:

Multiple wine courses with some hand washing in between because wine came in concentrated form and had to be mixed with water at the table. Then would follow a green/fresh course and the rest of the meal with wine courses always in between. Even the leaning at the Seder the Grash attributes to this etiquette as the elite Romans reclined on couches while eating their feasts.

There are however many difference between the Seder and the Roman banquet and the Seder itself emphasizes this point at the end. Afikomen is very often mistranslated as dessert. Rabbi Lieberman asserts that Afikomen is really a corruption of the Greek word afikomein (I do not know Ancient Greek but I will not argue with the Grash even though his is dead --in the same way that those who knew him when he was living were loathed to disagree with him as well). This word means to 'jump up' (or possibly NOT to jump up). Roman banquets were very often progressive dinners and bacchanalia. The Seder sets itself apart with this reminder that one cannot have one's Seder be progressive. As with the Korban Pesach, one must begin and end the Seder with the same family group. While rule might simply be a deterrent to unruly drunken behavior, it was more likely a device to keep families together. By beginning and ending this ritual of redemption, which also commemorates the evolution of the Jews from a group of families into a nation, it is all the more important to be with your family as your touchstone.

The Seder liturgy itself constantly highlights the theme of family and continuity and there is a recognition that a meal together has the power to transmit values and ideas in a way that no other behavior can. This has become a recognized phenomena in the greater culture. The Family Dinner Project (thegoodproject.org), is a specific organized devoted to helping families connect regularly by sitting down to dinner at least once a week. The psychological research suggests that by just eating together not only do families bond but children are taught values that enrich not only their families but society at large. In short, a good family dinner makes good citizens. Chazal perhaps understood that by ensuring that the Seder did not turn into a drunken free for all, the values of Torah and Jewish nationhood would be transmitted and preserved for all time.



Rabbi Marianne Novak received her BA in Political Science from Barnard College and her JD from Washington University School of Law in St. Louis. She has served as the Endowment Director at the Jewish Federation of St. Louis and also helped start the Women's Tefillah Group at Bais Abraham. Marianne then moved to Skokie, Illinois, became a Gabbait for the Skokie Women's Tefillah Group, and taught Bat Mitzvah students. Marianne is an instructor and curriculum developer for the Florence Melton Adult School of Jewish Learning and taught Tanakh at Rochelle Zelle Jewish High School. She has lectured for many Jewish organizations and synagogues, and writes a blog for the Times of Israel. Marianne lives in Skokie with her husband Noam Stadlan and family.

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