

SAMCHAINU GUIDE TO CLEANING FOR PESACH

A SELECTION OF LAWS & CUSTOMS WITH A FOCUS ON SINGLE MOTHER FAMILIES

Reviewed by Rabbi Yosef Eisen Shlit" a



The Shelah Hakadosh writes that learning and properly observing the laws of a Holiday infuse the Chag with tremendous blessing. Please note that the laws and customs contained in this article follow the Ashkenazi custom.

THE CORRECT PERSPECTIVE

All women, especially women making Yom Tov on their own, are faced with the huge task of getting ready for Pesach. Besides for all the shopping and cooking (if making Yom Tov at home,) of course there is the cleaning. Cleaning and preparing the house for Pesach can be very overwhelming and for some, exhausting.

We know the concept of "Deracheha darchei noam"- all the mitzvos are pleasant. Hashem gave us mitavos so that we should benefit from them. This is especially true concerning Yom Tov, when there is a special mitzvah to enjoy Yom Tov. If the pressures from the responsibilities of cleaning are so great that you can not feel the beauty and excitement of the approaching Yom Tov, sometimes even depriving us from experiencing the joy of Yom Tov^ו, this is obviously not what the Torah wants.

Going above and beyond what the Torah requires is always praiseworthy, but never when it takes a toll on our serenity and happiness! We should try to stay focused on the goal of coming to the Seder with a feeling of tranquility, and then will truly experience the freedom of Seder Night.

For this reason, this guide will try to clarify what our obligations are and what our goals should be when getting our homes ready for Pesach.

Another point that is important to note is the value of having a Rav. Besides for the many advantages throughout the year, Pesach in particular is a time when many questions arise. Having a competent Halachic authority who is understanding of your needs and the needs of your family is an essential ingredient in preparing for Pesach with calm and confidence.

REMOVING CHOMETZ FROM OUR POSSESSION

There is an obligation and mitzvah to get rid of all chometz in our possession before the arrival of Pesach. The main concept of the mitzvah to get rid of our chometz and enter Pesach chometz-free.

There are 3 basic ways to accomplish this:

- 1- Bitul Chometz – verbally nullifying your chometz on erev Pesach
- 2- Mechiras Chometz- Selling your chometz to a non-Jew (This should be arranged in advance through a Rav.)
- 3- Biur Chometz – Destroying chometz(usually through burning)

Some say that the mitzvah is specifically to destroy the chometz on Erev Pesach. This is the reasoning behind the custom of burning chometz on Erev Pesach.

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BEDIKAS CHOMETZ

In addition to the strict restriction of eating any chometz on Pesach, there is a Torah prohibition to own any chometz on Pesach. As an extra protection to ensure that no one would mistakenly eat or own chometz on Pesach, our Sages instituted the mitzvah of bedikas chometz (searching for chometz). The search, which requires looking for and removing all chometz from one's home, ensures that no one will have ownership of chometz on Pesach. Additionally, the search safeguards against accidental eating of chometz. Although any chometz in the home will have been sold and/or nullified, our Sages wanted to ensure that no one would accidentally eat any chometz that remains, since eating even the tiniest crumb of chometz is strictly forbidden on Pesach. After the search, we are confident that this will not occur.

R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach says that Bedikas Chometz is a check to determine that our houses have been properly cleaned. One should go throughout the entire house, checking that all areas have been cleaned as they should have been.

“PESACH CLEANING”

The mitzvah of bedikas chometz requires us to thoroughly search our houses prior to Pesach. In essence, our entire “Pesach cleaning” is really in preparation for the final bedikas chometz, which takes place the night before Pesach.

Cleaning is necessary in places that have possibly been exposed to chometz throughout the year, even once. Places where chometz has not been brought, such as an unfinished attic or boiler room, do not require cleaning. In a home with young children, one must clean and check any area that the children have access to.

The main purpose of cleaning is to prevent the possibility of eating chometz on Pesach. Therefore, the chometz that we are most concerned with removing is chometz substantial enough that one could come to G-d forbid inadvertently eat it on Pesach. In any non-eating area of the house, tiny crumbs are not a concern once selling and nullifying the chometz have been done. However, we should take the utmost care when cleaning the kitchen and dining areas, so that no chometz particles remain in close proximity to where we prepare and eat our Pesach food.

Heavy furniture that is never moved is not required to be moved if people cannot access behind it, since no one will see or inadvertently eat any chometz that may be behind it. Any toy that might be used on Pesach should be thoroughly cleaned, even for a tiny trace of chometz, since young children could come to eat small crumbs, G-d forbid.

KITCHEN AND EATING AREAS

As mentioned earlier, kitchen and eating areas have a more stringent status than the rest of the house, since we are concerned that tiny chometz particles may inadvertently be eaten. Any cabinet, drawer, or surface that will be used on Pesach must be thoroughly cleaned from any trace of chometz, and the custom is to line it. Tabletops and highchair trays should be cleaned and covered (with contact paper or similar covering). Refrigerators, freezers, and sinks, including all crevices, must be carefully cleaned and covered. Other places that require thorough cleaning (including removal of all crumbs) are pockets of clothing that will be worn on Pesach, pocketbooks, and cars that will be driven on Chol Hamoed.

Ovens and sinks require kashering.

Anyone going away for the entire Pesach should ask a Rav about their requirements of cleaning and bedikas chometz.