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## CLEANING FOR PESACH: IN PERSPECTIVE

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Due to the fact that the many complicated *halachos* of Pesach-cleaning get tied together in our heads, let us here carefully delineate what the prohibitions are and what they are not. We can then more easily apply the *halacha* to common cases:

- 1) Aside for the prohibition against eating *chametz* and their mixtures on Pesach there is a separate, Biblical, prohibition of **possessing** *chametz* over Pesach.
- 2) There is therefore an obligation to check for, remove, and destroy all *chametz* in one's home on the 14<sup>th</sup> of *Nissan*. There is no requirement for cleaning unless directly related to the removal of *chametz*.
- 3) The custom today is to thoroughly clean our homes long before the night of the 14<sup>th</sup>. Some posit that cleaning too well before the night of the 14<sup>th</sup> may establish our homes as being "*chametz-free*" thus obligating one to abstain from a *beracha* on the 14<sup>th</sup>. It is therefore advisable for the head of the household, on the night of the 14<sup>th</sup>, to either:
  - A. See his job as also being to ask and determine if the house was cleaned well, and to search so as to verify the response he

received to that question (Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach; cf. Rama 433:11).

- B. Make sure that a small portion of the house remain unchecked before the 14<sup>th</sup> (Beis HaLevi).
- 4) Aside from the *bedikah*, one must also nullify the *chametz* in their home before Pesach. This nullification alone – without any cleaning before or after – removes all Biblical concerns, **yet** the basic *halacha* still demands a thorough cleaning from, and burning / destroying of all *chametz* due to one of the following fears:
- A. Such a nullification may not have been done wholeheartedly.
- B. *Chametz* is something that we are allowed to eat all year, therefore having it in one's proximity over Pesach can lead to it mistakenly being eaten.
- 5) The Torah prohibition of possessing *chametz* concerns only what is, minimally, the size of an olive. *Chametz* that is less than this size is of no **Biblical** concern. This should not be confused with the prohibition of **eating** *chametz* which has **no** minimum *shiur* (measurement) [save for the *kares* penalty involved].
- 6) However, some rule that one must still remove such small crumbs out of Rabbinical concern (Chafetz Chaim [*sefer Machane Yisroel*]; Shulchan Aruch HaRav, et al.). all opinions agree that small crumbs less than an olive-size that are also slightly inedible are of no concern at all (Mishnah Berurah). Certainly, if a heavy piece of equipment

*might* cover (likely disgusting) *chametz* that will be sold anyway – and be out of view – one need not move to clean behind it (e.g. oven, refrigerator) unless one fears large pieces of *chametz* may become visible on Pesach.

- 7) If one fears *chametz* behind a large appliance or shelf space (e.g. a bookshelf) that cannot be moved without great effort (e.g. unscrewing panels, or very tricky lifting) there is no need to remove it, especially if any *chametz* there would be inedible (Shulchan Aruch HaRav, some understand his words as applying to even large pieces of *chametz*).
- 8) Based on all of the above, while it is praiseworthy to clean *seforim* / books of tiny crumbs, it is not an obligation (Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, et al.). Nevertheless one should not bring unchecked *seforim* to the table where a crumb could fall into food (Rav Moshe Feinstein). Pockets of clothing, however, must be checked (Rama).
- 9) All areas of one's home and property (e.g. car) must be cleaned of *chametz*, save for an area where one is certain no *chametz* has entered. In homes where young children are present, even such spaces must be checked unless the children have no way of entering.
- 10) All areas that are to be sold to a non-Jew for Pesach need not be checked or cleaned for *chametz* (Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach; cf. Mishnah Berurah 436:32). Nevertheless, any such *chametz* must be out of view over Pesach (behind a *mechitzah* / barrier of at least 38 inches

high). Regarding one who is selling their entire home, see sale sheet, page 18 below.