

# 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 של"ה הקדוש writes that learning and properly observing the Halachos of a חג infuse the Yom Tov with tremendous Bracha. Please note that the Halachos and Minhagim contained in this article follow the custom of בני אשכנז.*

## דרכי דרכי נועם

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 and planning יו"ט) 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 דרכי דרכי נועם - all the מצוות are pleasant. Hashem gave us מצוות so that we should benefit from them. This is especially true concerning יום טוב, when there is a special מצוה of יו"ט - 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 יו"ט, sometimes even depriving us from having שמחת יו"ט, this is obviously not what the תורה 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 פסח .

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 חמץ FROM OUR POSSESSION

The פסוק says "שְׁבַעַת יָמִים מִצּוֹת תֹּאכְלוּ אֶךְ בַּיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן תִּשְׁבִּיתוּ שָׂאֵר מִבְּתִיכֶם". There is a מצוה and חיוב to get rid of all חמץ in our possession before the arrival of פסח. The main concept of the מצוה to get rid of our חמץ and enter Pesach חמץ-free.

There are 3 basic ways to accomplish this:

- 1- ערב פסח - ביטול חמץ - verbally nullifying your חמץ on פסח
- 2- מכירת חמץ - Selling your חמץ to a non-Jew (This should be arranged in advance through a Rav.)
- 3- ביעור חמץ - Destroying חמץ (usually through burning)

Some say that the מצוה is דוקא to destroy the חמץ on פסח. This is the reasoning behind the custom of burning חמץ on ערב פסח.

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## בדיקת חמץ

In addition to the strict restriction of eating any חמץ on פסח, there is an איסור דארייתא to own any חמץ on פסח. As an extra protection to ensure that no one would mistakenly eat or own חמץ on פסח, Chazal instituted the מצוה of בדיקת חמץ. The בדיקה, which requires searching for and removing all חמץ from one's home, ensures that no one will have ownership of חמץ on פסח. Additionally, the בדיקה safeguards against accidental eating of חמץ. Although any חמץ in the home will have been sold and/or nullified, חז"ל wanted to ensure that no one would accidentally eat any חמץ that remains, since eating even the tiniest crumb of חמץ is strictly forbidden on פסח. After the בדיקה, we are confident that this will not occur.

R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach says that the בדיקה 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 מצוה of בדיקת חמץ requires us to thoroughly search our houses prior to יו"ט. In essence, our entire “פסח cleaning” is really in preparation for the final בדיקה, which takes place the night of ערב פסח.

Cleaning is necessary in places that have possibly been exposed to חמץ throughout the year, even once. Places where חמץ 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 חמץ on פסח. Therefore, the חמץ that we are most concerned with removing is חמץ substantial enough that one could come to ח"ו inadvertently eat it on פסח. In any non-eating area of the house, tiny crumbs are not a concern once מכירה and ביטול have properly been done. However, we should take the utmost care when cleaning the kitchen and dining areas, so that no חמץ particles whatsoever remain in close proximity to where we prepare and eat our פסח 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 חמץ that may be behind it.

Any toy that might be used on פסח should be thoroughly cleaned, even for the smallest trace of חמץ, since young children could come to eat small crumbs, ח"ו.

## 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 חמץ particles may inadvertently be eaten. Any cabinet, drawer, or surface that will be used on פסח must be thoroughly cleaned from any trace of חמץ, and the מנהג 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.

Ovens and sinks require kashering.

Other places that require thorough cleaning (including removal of all crumbs) are pockets of clothing that will be worn on פסח, pocketbooks, and cars that will be driven on חוהמ"ד.

Anyone going away for the entire פסח should speak to a Rav about their obligations regarding cleaning and בדיקת חמץ.