

כ"ז אדר תש"פ לפ"ק

## Pesach Cleaning Guidelines in the Coronavirus era

Dearest Fellow *Shluchim*,

May *Hashem* keep all of Klal Yisroel safe and may we merit a *Kosher Freilichen* Pesach. I have received many inquiries at to the *halachic* requirements of cleaning for *Pesach* this year during the terrible Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic that we are experiencing. Since the children are home all day, and outside cleaning help is scarce, many households find it extremely difficult to carry out the normal cleaning procedures that they are accustomed to in a typical year. Also, there are many families that generally go away for *Pesach* and are now forced to prepare *Pesach* themselves at home – something that is extremely difficult for many families. I have therefore prepared the following essential guidelines for people to follow during these difficult times.

We all envision a properly cleaned *Pesach* home. However, it is incumbent upon us to realize that this year we simply cannot live up to that expectation. One may not be overzealous in cleaning (especially this year), as it has been said (in jest): A homemaker must know that “dust is not *chametz* and children are not the *Korbon Pesach!*”

During these times we must tread carefully in deciding between which customs and practices can and must be modified and/or omitted due to the difficult situation, and which ones must be upheld as required by *halachah* even now. We must know that the omission of certain customs this year is itself a fulfillment of the will of *Hashem*, as the *Gemara* states in *Kiddushin* (40a): "A person who makes an effort to perform a *mitzvah* and was prevented from doing so by unavoidable circumstances is considered by *Heaven* as though he has actually done the *mitzvah*."

There is a well-known *Rosh* that states: "*Yisroel Kedoshim* (*Yidden* are holy) and eradicate every last bit of *chametz* even those stuck to the walls of the homes." However, one must know to what the *Rosh* refers. There are certain items that must be cleaned of *chametz* according to the basic *halachah*, while there are other things that are cleaned because of a stringency based on the *Rosh's* concept of "*Yisrael Kedoshim*," while there are yet other things that [many people might do, but] in reality there is no point in doing at all. Generally speaking, the concept of "*Yisrael Kedoshim*" applies with regard to items that come in direct contact with eating and drinking. For since one is forbidden to eat even a minute amount of *chametz* on *Pesach*, we say "*Yisroel Kedoshim*" – *Yidden* are holy and they exercise extreme caution so as not to transgress and come to eat even the slightest particle of *chametz* on *Pesach*. However, there is a major difference between cleaning things that might have come in contact with *chametz* during the year and things which, realistically speaking, have not come in any contact with *chametz* during the year.

### Items That Do Not Require Any Cleaning

1. It is well known that it was the custom of our *Rebbeim* to be lenient (even in ordinary years) and sell all their *chametz* – even actual *chametz* (*chametz gamur*) – to a non-Jew before Pesach. The *Tzemach Tzedek* in fact would deliberately set aside some *chametz* to sell, so that on *Motzei Yom Tov* he would have what to eat (*Lesheima Oizen* p. 58). We also have a copy of the *chametz* bill of sale drawn up by the *Rebbe Rashab*, in which it is apparent that he sold actual *chametz*. [This was also the custom of many *Tzaddikim* in Poland, such as the *Rebbs* of, *Ropshitz*, *Tzanz* and others.]

Thus, even a person who generally conducts himself stringently and refrains from selling actual *chametz* to a *goy*, this year (when one might be fearful of not having sufficient foodstuff after *Pesach*) it is advisable for one to be lenient and sell *all* of his *chametz* to a *goy*, even actual *chametz*, for we do not know what the morrow will bring. In this case there is no need for one to make *hataras nedarim* (to annul his vows as generally required when one changes his custom), for as long as he does not intend to change his custom permanently but rather only for the current year due to the extenuating circumstances, it is not considered a violation of his vow (*Dagul Meravavah*, *Yoreh Deah* §212).

2. It is unnecessary to clean any item or area that one plans to sell to the *goy*. **One must be vigilant to lock the cabinet and clearly label it as "sold to the Goy."**
3. One who has a *Pesach* kitchen, and will not be using his regular kitchen area on *Pesach*, need not clean his regular kitchen at all. They need only to close (and lock) up the kitchen and label it "sold to the *goy*."
4. Similarly, one need not clean any kitchen cabinets that will not be used on *Pesach*. One should simply close them up and sell them to the *goy*, and label them as above.
5. So too, any other cabinets, closets, ovens or refrigerators that will not be used on *Pesach* should be closed up and marked appropriately, and there is no need to clean them.
6. Also, any toys, books, clothing, *Seforim*, *Siddurim* and *Zmiros* that are used throughout the year with *chametz*, should be locked in a cabinet or closet and sold, as mentioned above, and there is no need to clean them.
7. There is no need to clean areas into which people do not bring food during the year, such as the attic, boiler room, and shed.
8. There is no need to move away and clean under heavy appliances or furniture (i.e., items which one generally does not move under normal circumstances). Even if one knows that there is some *chametz* under those heavy items, one need only clean around and under them to the extent that one's hand can reach (without moving them away). Understandably, though, if one did not move the appliance before *Pesach*, one should not move it during *Pesach*, so as not to uncover *chametz* on *Yom Tov*.
9. So too, one need not clean inside the radiators/steams beyond what his hand can reach, even if there is some visible *chametz* there! If one wants to be stringent in such a case, he can spray detergent on the visible *chametz*, thereby rendering it inedible for a dog (and thus no longer prohibited).
10. Bedroom walls and windows do not need more than just a general wiping.
11. There is no need to clean or wipe *any* lighting fixtures or chandeliers throughout the house, whether in the dining room, kitchen or elsewhere.
12. There is no obligation to polish all of one's silver (such as silverware, fruit bowls, candy dishes, menorah) before Pesach. If one wishes to use his *chametz* silverware for eating on Pesach, then, of course, they need to be properly *kashered*. If one wishes to use a silver fruit bowl or other such ornament on his table on Pesach, it is permissible to do so without koshering, as long as it is washed

clean of *chametz*. (Some have the custom to *kasher* such items if they will be used for food or near food on Pesach.)

### Items That Require Cleaning

**As a general rule, all areas that come in contact with food during the year must be cleaned well, even this year (unless sold to the *goy*).**

**1. Kitchen:**

- a. All cabinets, refrigerators, freezers, stoves, counters, and tables that are used during the year must be cleaned well if they will be used on *Pesach*.
- b. Stoves, tables and countertops must either be *kashered* or covered with a double covering.
- c. Walls in the kitchen and eating areas (within reach of a person's hands) should be washed
- d. Refrigerators and freezers must be cleaned very well. One should get into the corners and crevices, as far as possible, though there is no need to take it apart. If one can see *chametz* that is beyond his reach, it is advisable to spray detergent or bleach onto it.
- e. Chairs and highchairs must be cleaned in all the crevices, yet do not need to be taken apart. Unreachable *chametz*, that can be seen under the plastic may be ignored.

**2. Dining Room:**

- a. Table needs to be cleaned and covered.
- b. Chairs should be cleaned in all crevices, yet do not need to be taken apart. Unreachable *chametz* that can be seen under the plastic may be ignored.
- c. Walls in the eating areas should be washed (within reach of a person's hands).
- d. Couches and recliners should be vacuumed well.

**3. Bedrooms:**

- a. Closets and beds should be cleaned to some extent, but they do not require the same thorough cleaning as a kitchen area where food is eaten all year, unless these areas are known to have *chametz*.
- b. Windowsills should be checked for *chometz*.

**4. Porches and Yards:**

- a. Porches and Yards should be swept close to *Pesach*, ensuring that there are no large pieces of *chametz* there.
- b. Outdoor garbage cans and garbage enclosures must be checked ensuring that there is no *Kzayis* (olive-size piece) of edible *chametz* there.

**Miscellaneous:**

5. It is advisable to have **toys** exclusively for *Pesach* use; otherwise they must be washed very well, since children tend to take them into their mouths. If they have cracks then they must be washed with strong detergent. If possible they should be washed in the washing machine or dishwasher (provided they will not break or break the machine).
6. **Clothing** worn on *Pesach* must be cleaned well, especially children's clothing. Pockets should be turned inside out and laundered with laundry detergent.
7. **Cars** that will not be used on *Pesach* need not be cleaned and should be sold to the *Goy*. Cars that will be used on *Pesach* must be cleaned well. One must clean out all of the pockets, the sides of seats and under them, glove compartment, etc.
8. **Pocketbooks** and wallets should be sold if unneeded on *Pesach*, otherwise they should be cleaned well.
9. Consult your Rov regarding **medication** that has *chametz* ingredients. Medication not needed on *Pesach* should be sold to the *Goy*.

10. **Kitniyos** need not be sold.
11. Sugar, salt or cocoa, even if they had been opened during the year, need not be disposed of before *Pesach*, as they can be sold to a *Goy*. (This applies in all years.)
12. **Cosmetics:** Makeup, creams and perfumes need not be sold to a *Goy*. However, the *Minhag* is to be stringent and sell these items and use only *Kosher for Pesach* products.
13. Cleaning and laundry detergents, soap and shampoo may be used on *Pesach* even without *Pesach* certification, since they are inedible.
14. **Books** must be cleaned thoroughly if they are intended for use on *Pesach*. However, even if cleaned they should not be placed on a table or near food. It is recommended that one wash their hands after using them. Those that are vigilant throughout the year and do not use them at the table or with food, do not need to clean them and may use them on *Pesach*, yet it is still advisable not to place them on the table where one eats.
15. One may rely on their grown children to do their *Pesach* cleaning. So too, one may rely on the cleaning help of a non-Jewish cleaning lady. However, one should periodically check to ensure that they are doing a proper "*Pesach*" cleaning.
16. One should be vigilant that young children do not bring any *chametz* into the areas that have already been cleaned for *Pesach*. If by chance one discovers *chametz* in a cleaned room, one need only to remove the *chametz* and there is no obligation to reclean the entire room.
17. I wish to reiterate that which was stated above, even one who generally refrains from selling *chametz gamur* (absolute *chametz*), it is advisable this year to be lenient and sell *all* of one's *chametz*, due to our unknown precarious situation. However, one must be certain to transact the sale of *chametz that includes an Urev Kablen* through a competent *Rov* or *Posek*.

In the *zechus* of our efforts to remove every last crumb of *chametz* may we merit that *Heaven* will likewise remove every last bit of this terrible virus that has consumed *Klal Yisroel*. Wishing a speedy *Refuah Shleima* to all the *cholim* of *Klal Yisroel* and may we merit the ultimate *Geula* through the coming of *Moshiach*. In *Nissan* we were redeemed and in the future too in *Nissan* we will be redeemed, may it be very soon *bemeheirah b'yameinu mamush*.

ה'תשפ"ב כ"ב ניסן