

Guidelines for Preparing and Cleaning for Pesach

1. *The Mindset when Cleaning for Pesach*

The goal of preparing for *Pesach* is to be able to go into *Pesach* feeling happy and excited that this amazing *Yom Tov* is here. Obviously, this can be hard and stressful, but a little planning can turn it into a smooth experience. Rav Shimshon Pincus zt"l asks, why is the *Seder* the first night of *Yom Tov*, it should rather be in the morning, after a good night's sleep? He explains that there is no better feeling than sitting down at the *Seder* and saying to oneself, I worked so hard to please *Hashem* -- look how worn out I am! This is the thought that we need to keep in our minds throughout our preparations, we are doing this to please *Hashem*.

When people used to live in one room apartments it was feasible to scrub the walls in order to remove every speck of *chametz*, so that not even a *משהו* was left. However, nowadays, we have larger apartments or even houses and many appliances. To start scrubbing everything down is just going to tire ourselves out, causing us not to enjoy the *Seder* and ultimately it will impact our entire *Pesach*.

2. *The Focus of the Cleaning*

Besides the prohibition of eating or benefiting from the *chametz* on *Pesach*, it is also *assur* to own *chametz*. This *issur* only applies to pieces of *chametz* the size of a *k'zayis* (approximately the size of a small match box) and this must be disposed. Although *chametz* smaller than a *k'zayis*, is not included in the *issur* of owning *chametz* on *Pesach*, there is a *חשש* that one may come to eat this *chametz* by mistake (the *issur* of eating *chametz* includes even eating a *משהו*) therefore this too needs to be gotten rid of. For example, even one cheerio, a small piece of a cookie or pretzel needs to be thrown out before *Yom Tov*. However, since the *issur* on less than a *k'zayis* is only the chance of mistakenly coming to eat the *chametz*, this only applies to *chametz* that will be eaten. Any *chametz* that will not be eaten because it is dirty should not be a focus in the cleaning for *Pesach*. Crumbs are not *חשוב* and therefore they are automatically *batel*, and there is no need to search for them or to focus on them while cleaning.

Getting rid of the *chametz* that is prohibited to have around over *Pesach* should be the focus of the cleaning. (As a suggestion, if a woman decides to do spring cleaning and wants to involve her husband, do not call this *Pesach* cleaning, rather tell them him we are doing spring cleaning.)

3. *Guidelines for General Areas of the House*

Based on these general *halachos* the following is a concise guideline of how to clean every area in the house:

1. Any place where *chametz* may be stuck to it, like chairs, tables, or a couch: take a wet cloth with any cleaning agent (any soap is fine, there is no need for bleach) and wipe them down. This will make whatever may be stuck to them not edible and then we are not worried about someone coming to eat it by mistake. It is unnecessary to take these things apart.

2. There is no need to clean *seforim* and books, since no one is eating the crumbs that are left in them. However, it is suggested to check any *sefer* or book that one plans to bring to the table. Additionally, one can place a cover on the table and place the *seforim* on it, so that no crumbs end up in the food. *Bentchers* should be put away for *Pesach*.
3. As long as clothing was washed with detergent, no checking of the clothing is required. A coat pocket or children's coat that has not been washed (assuming that it is likely that *chametz* has been put there throughout the year) should be checked for *chametz* before *Pesach*.
4. The kitchen and dining room table should be washed well with soap. The table should then be covered any type of cover (even a plastic tablecloth), and put the tablecloth on top of this cover (there is no need to *kasher* tables).
5. Lower shelves of clothing closets that can be reached by children holding food should be emptied and washed down once. The higher shelves do not need cleaning.

4. *The Kitchen*

The kitchen is the most important room to clean in the house. We are extra concerned that there should not be any *chametz* at all around, since it is the place where the *Pesach* food will be prepared (and if even a slight amount of *chametz* is mistakenly eaten, we have transgressed the *issur* of eating *chametz* on *Pesach*).

1. Towels, oven mitts and tablecloths that were used with *chametz* should be washed with detergent and then may be used for *Pesach*.
2. Empty the pantry shelves and clean them well (there is no need to cover them).
3. Countertops should be *kashered* by cleaning well. When dry, pour boiling water on them or they may be covered. It is not necessary to do both.
4. Clean the backsplash well. If food can drip down from there it should be covered.
5. In the refrigerator and freezer, food sometimes spills and leaves crumbs. They should be cleaned very well, especially if shelves are glass. It is not necessary to cover the shelves unless it was hard to clean well.
6. One should use a sink insert with a porcelain or enamel sink. A stainless-steel sink can be *kashered* in the following way: the sink should not be used with hot water and hot food should not be placed in sink for 24 hours before *kashering*. After this 24-hour period, boil water. While it is bubbling, pour onto the sink. Most likely it will take 2 or 3 times to get all parts of the sink. Make sure to dry in between each time that you pour the boiling water.
7. There is no need to cover the faucet, just pour hot water on it.
8. Clean the floor of the stovetop well and cover it with thick aluminum foil. The burners and grates may be *kashered* with a *blech* and the fire will probably burn off anything stuck to them. This is done as follows: Clean them slightly beforehand, then turn on 3 flames and cover with the *blech*. Leave on for 10 minutes. The *blech* will probably get black and become very hot so be careful turning off the fire. Many people like to buy new grates for *Pesach*.
9. If the oven has self clean use the self clean mode to *kasher* the oven (the grates and burners from the stove top can be put in there as well in order to *kasher* them). In regard to non-self-cleaning ovens, there is discussion among the *Poskim* if they may be *kashered*. Many *poskim* suggest that one buy a convection oven (or the likes) instead of *kashering* the regular oven¹. However, some *poskim* hold that there is a way to *kasher* this type of oven: clean the oven well (whatever is burnt to the oven is burnt, and there is no need to worry about it) then turn the oven

¹ כן החמיר הגר"מ פיינשטיין זצ"ל.

on to the highest temperature for half an hour. The racks in the oven must be *kashered* by ליבון with a torch. It may be more practical to buy new ones.

10. Clean hotplates well and cover with thick foil.

11. We do not *kasher* microwaves or toaster ovens for *Pesach*.

5. *Objects around the House*

1. There is no need to *kasher* rings, however if possible don't wear them a day before *Pesach* (or at least avoid contact with hot *chametz*).

2. Clean the computer well using spray.

3. Being that children put toys in the mouth, they should be washed and cleaned. Or just buy new ones for *Pesach* and put them away from year to year.

4. A highchair tray should be washed well, making sure to clean every spot.

5. If possible, it is better to get new bottles and sippy cups since it goes into the baby's mouth (however, as long as they were used with cold liquids only it is not necessary to get new ones). If they were used for *kitniyos*, they should be kept and washed in a separate place.

6. It is also best to buy a new pacifier if possible, though *kashering* is also an option.

6. *Hag'alas Keilim*

During the year it is not so common to *kasher* utensils. However, it is more widespread to *kasher keilim* for *Pesach*. It is better to buy new utensils, but each person should only do what they can afford.

1. The way to do *Hag'alas Keilim* is as follows: It is best to not use the *keilim* for 24 hours before *kashering*. Clean the utensils well. Then, fill a pot of water and place it on the fire. When the water is bubbling (boiling) put the utensil into the water. The *minhag* is to then rinse the *keilim* with cold water. When *kashering* several *keilim* (one after another) make sure that the water is still boiling between each *keili*. It is permissible to dip half of the utensil in the boiling water, and then the other half (only by טבילת כלים must the whole piece be submerged at once).

2. *Hag'alas Keilim* is the way to *kasher* metal utensils. *Keilim* made from glass or plastic cannot be *kashered* for *Pesach*². Neither can china dishes. *Askenazim* generally do not *kasher* glass dishes³.

3. Anything that was used on the *Shabbos* table (like a silver *kiddush* cup or wine decanter made of metal) even though it was only used with cold things (and therefore it should be enough just to wash it off) the *minhag* nonetheless is to *kasher* it through *Hag'alas Keilim*. This *Hag'alas Keilim* can be done at home.

4. Things that were on the *Shabbos* table but are not eaten from (i.e. candlestick trays, vases, etc.) do not require any *kashering*. However, they should be cleaned before using on *Pesach*.

5. Some utensils require a more stringent way of *kashering* called ליבון which is *kashering* with an actual fire. The general rule is that utensils that were used with fire must be *kashered* with fire (i.e. a grill). If one wants to *kasher* a frying pan, it is good to find someplace that has a blowtorch available.

² כן היא שיטת הגר"מ פיינשטיין זצ"ל.

³ במקום שיש צורך, יש לשאול שאילת רב.

7. Medicines & Cosmetics

1. Medicines in the form of pills and capsules to not present any issue of *chametz* on *Pesach* (even though there are many lists compiled on the matter).
2. Syrups, especially those for children with a sweet taste, should have a *hechsher* for *Pesach*. Please note, that sometimes it is just an issue of *kitniyos* and one can be lenient, a *Rav* should be consulted.
3. Ointments and creams are bitter tasting and therefore not an issue.
4. Body soaps and shampoos do not require a special *hechsher* for *Pesach*.
5. It is preferable to buy toothpaste, mouthwash, and other such items which go into the mouth that have a *hechsher* for *Pesach*.
6. There is no need for makeup or perfume to have a *hechsher* for *Pesach*. A new lipstick should be used for *Pesach*.

8. Conclusion

Remember, everything only needs to be cleaned one time. Cleaning tends to be somewhat of a *טירחא* and can cost a lot of money. However, great reward comes along with it, even in this world. The *seforim* bring down that just like we scrubbed and cleaned for *Pesach*, *Hashem* will scrub and clean us from any *aveiros* that are stuck to us.