

“Bedikas Chometz Guidelines & Pesach Away From Home”

How extensive does the search for chametz have to be? How is it possible to thoroughly search a whole house in a short period of time?

Halachically speaking, an extensive and thorough search is required in any place where chametz may have been brought during the past year. Since it is almost impossible to properly check an entire house in a short period of time, some people actually spend many hours checking and searching their houses on the night of bedikas chametz, often devoting a good part of the night to the bedikah. But most people cannot—or do not—spend so much time searching their homes for chametz. How, then, do they fulfill this obligation?

Several poskim find justification (limud zechus) for the laxer version of bedikas chametz, as the house has undergone many weeks of meticulous pre-Pesach cleaning and scrubbing and there is no vestige of chametz around. Once the rooms of the house have been cleaned, they may be halachically considered as “a place into which no chametz has been brought.” While checking and searching is still required in order to ascertain that no spot in the house was overlooked, the search need not be as thorough and exacting as if no cleaning had been done.

A better suggestion—for those who do not do a meticulous search on the night before Pesach—is to do partial searches earlier. As soon as a certain area in the house is cleaned, the area should be carefully checked for chametz—either at night using a flashlight or in the daytime by natural light. The wife or an older child can be entrusted with this search. If the house is checked in stages, then an exhaustive search need not be repeated on the night before Pesach in the areas that were already checked, provided that it is certain that no new chametz was carried into those areas.

Is it halachically acceptable to celebrate Pesach away from home after selling one’s home with all of its chametz contents to a non-Jew?

Anyone who owns chametz is obligated to get rid of it before Pesach begins. This can be accomplished in one of two ways: By destroying it or by selling it [or giving it away] to a non-Jew. Either way, one fulfills his basic obligation and does not transgress the Biblical injunction against owning any chametz.

But there is something else to consider: The Rabbis obligated each person to search for chametz on the night before Pesach. [If one leaves town before that time, he is still obligated to search for chametz the night before he leaves, although no blessing is recited for that search.] In the opinion of many poskim, the search for chametz is obligatory whether or not one owns his chametz by the time Pesach arrives, since once the rabbinic ordinance was enacted, it cannot be abrogated regardless of the circumstances. Consequently, selling the house to a non-Jew does not free one from his personal obligation to search for chametz.

A solution to this problem is to set aside one room in the house, even a small one, and not sell it to the non-Jew along with the rest of the house. That room should be cleaned for Pesach and thoroughly searched for chametz on the night before Pesach, with the proper blessing recited for the bedikah[5]. One who will have already gone out of town by the night before Pesach should follow the same procedure on the night before he leaves—but he may not recite a blessing on the bedikah.

*(Rabbi Daniel Neustadt; torah.org
For final rulings, consult your Rav)*