

# BEDIKAS CHOMETZ GUIDELINES

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Before Pesach, a person is obligated to perform *bedikas chometz*, a search of his house and possessions, to ensure that he does not own any *chometz*. The *bedika* should be conducted at the beginning of the night of the 14<sup>th</sup> of *Nissan*, immediately after *tzeis hakochavim*.<sup>1</sup> If he did not do so, the *bedika* can be done all night. *Bedieved*, if he did not perform the *bedika* that night he should do it on the day of the 14<sup>th</sup> of *Nissan*.<sup>2</sup>

If he will not be home on the night of the 14<sup>th</sup> of *Nissan*, he should appoint another adult to perform the *bedika* on his behalf.<sup>3</sup> If he leaves his house within thirty days of Pesach, and is not planning to return and conduct a *bedika* or have someone else perform a *bedika* for him, then he should do *bedikas chometz* without reciting a *bracha* at night before he leaves.<sup>4</sup>

If he leaves his house more than thirty days beforehand (i.e., the 14<sup>th</sup> of *Adar* or earlier) and is not planning to return for Pesach, he does not need to perform *bedikas chometz* and may rely on the *bitul* that he recites on Erev Pesach at the time of *chometz* burning. However, he should remove or sell any known *chometz* in the house. If he plans to return home on Pesach and will not have someone else perform a *bedika* for him, he must perform *bedikas chometz* before he leaves.<sup>5</sup>

There is no need to check areas containing *chometz* which will be sold to a non-Jew before Pesach.<sup>6</sup> If a person is home on the night of the 14<sup>th</sup> of *Nissan* but is planning to leave for the duration of Pesach, he may arrange to sell the *chometz* in all the rooms of his house - except one - to a non-Jew and check that room to fulfill the mitzvah of *bedikas chometz*.<sup>7</sup> (If it is his custom not to sell *chometz gamur*, then he should make sure that there is no *chometz gamur* in the other rooms). If guests will be staying in the house during Pesach and will be using some of the rooms, those rooms must be checked for *chometz*.

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The following abbreviations have been used: M.B – *Mishna Berura*, S.A. – *Shulchan Aruch*, S.H. – *Shaar HaTziyun*, O.C. – *Orach Chaim*. All citations to the *Shulchan Aruch* refer to section *Orach Chayim*.

1. M.B. 431:1. Also see *Halichos Shlomo* (*Pesach* 5:10) quoting Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, *zt"l*.

2. S.A. 433:1 and M.B. 433:2

3. M.B. 432:8, 436:1. See there and *Aruch HaShulchan* 437:7 regarding appointing a woman.

4. S.A. 436:1

5. S.A. 436:1, M.B. 436:5, *Igros Moshe* O.C. 4:95.

6. See M.B. 436:32. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach states that the prevalent custom is to be lenient (*Halichos Shlomo Pesach* page 101).

7. Similar to S.A. *HaGra*"z 433:7 who states that one may be *bodek* other rooms earlier and leave one room for *bedika* on the night of the 14<sup>th</sup>.

Guests who arrive before the night of the 14th of *Nissan* are obligated to check for *chometz*. If the owner of the house does not want them searching his house, he can perform a *bedika* on the house himself and leave one area for the guests to be *bodek*. People staying at a hotel for Pesach should perform a *bedika* on their room. If they arrive on the day of the 14th of *Nissan*, a *bedika* should be done at that time. A *bracha* is not recited over the *bedika* of a hotel room.<sup>8</sup>

One should not begin any *melacha* within half an hour before *tzeis hakochavim* on the night of *bedikas chometz*. He should not eat a *beitza* or more of bread, cake or cookies at that time; he may eat other food. He may learn *Torah* but should arrange for a *shomer* or set an alarm to ensure that he stops for *bedikas chometz*. At *tzeis hakochavim*, he should stop whatever he is doing, no longer eat any food, and conduct the *bedika*.<sup>9</sup> He could daven *Maariv* before the *bedika*, although if he always davens at a specific later time he can perform the *bedika* first and *daven* at that time.<sup>10</sup>

When performing *bedikas chometz*, one should search his house for any edible crumbs of *chometz*.<sup>11</sup> *Mei'ikar hadin*, it is not necessary to clean one's house from small soiled particles of *chometz* which will not come into contact with food on Pesach.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, many are stringent and attempt to rid their house of all *chometz*.<sup>13</sup> It is not necessary to check books and *sefarim* for *chometz*, although those which will be brought to the table on Pesach should be cleaned to ensure that they do not contain crumbs which could fall into one's food.<sup>14</sup>

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8. Heard from Rav Moshe Heinemann, *shlit"a*, that since the room is cleaned before one's arrival it could be argued that it is a *mokom she'ein machnisin bo chometz*. See also <https://www.star-k.org/articles/kashrus-kurrents/105/the-travelers-halachic-guide-to-hotels>

9. S.A. 331:2 and M.B. there.

10. See M.B. 331:8. The Chazon Ish and the Steipler Gaon checked after *Maariv* (*Orchos Rabbeinu* vol. 2 page 1). Similarly, Rav Moshe Feinstein, *zt"l*, said that one should daven *Maariv* immediately after *tzeis hakochavim* and be *bodek* after that (*Shmaiteta De'Moshe – Shemuos Moshe* 431:2).

11. The implication of S.H. 433:33 is that it is unnecessary to check for crumbs, as noted in *Halichos Shlomo* (Pesach page 103). However, the *Chayei Odom* 119:6 states the *Chazal* necessitated checking even for crumbs, due to the concern that one may come to eat them on Pesach. Rav Elyashiv, *zt"l*, writes that the custom follows the *Chayei Odom* (*Ashrei Ha'Ish* O.C. vol. 3 page 358).

12. The M.B. 442:33 writes that, according to all opinions, soiled *chometz* (*metunaf ketzas*) which is smaller than a *kezayis* does not need to be disposed of. See also M.B. 444:15.

13. The Rosh (*Pesachim* 3:2) writes "Yisroel are *kedoshim* and scrub away even the smallest amount of *chometz*". S.A. 442:6 mentions a custom to scrub the walls, and M.B. 442:28 writes that one should not mock this custom by arguing that it is an unnecessary stringency. Rav Elyashiv (*Ashrei Ha'Ish* O.C. vol. 3 page 355) writes that cracks and crevices that may contain *chometz* which cannot be cleaned should be splashed with material that will render the *chometz* inedible to even a dog.

14. The *Maaseh Rav* #178 states that the Gra would check his *sefarim* for *chometz*, and this is also the opinion of the Chazon Ish O.C. 116:18. Rav Elyashiv (*Ashrei Ha'Ish* O.C. vol. 3 page 355) writes that one is not obligated to check *sefarim*, although one should not place unchecked *sefarim* on the table on Pesach due to the concern that a crumb of *chometz* may fall into one's food.

The *bedika* should be conducted by the light of a candle with a single wick.<sup>15</sup> Some have the custom to turn off the house lights during the *bedika*;<sup>16</sup> others leave them on, using both the house lights and a candle to conduct the search.<sup>17</sup> The prevailing custom is for ten pieces of bread to be placed in different areas of the house before the *bedika*<sup>18</sup> (although some do not have this *minhag*).<sup>19</sup> Some people take care that each piece is smaller than a *kezayis*,<sup>20</sup> and it is a good idea to wrap them up in order to ensure that no crumbs are left behind. The person conducting the *bedika* could position the pieces of bread, but it is customary for another member of the household to do so.<sup>21</sup> One may use a flashlight to aid in the search.<sup>22</sup>

For the purposes of this article, we will assume that the reader is familiar with the process of *bedikas chometz*. Among other areas, one should remember to check clothing pockets, handbags, strollers, car seats, children's knapsacks, pet cages, fish tanks, pet and fish food, cars and garages. One should ensure that vacuum bags containing *chometz* are discarded and that garbage cans are cleaned. Areas which were thoroughly cleaned beforehand do not need to be scrutinized

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Rav Moshe Feinstein (*Shmaiteta De'Moshe – Shemuos Moshe* 433:3) and Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (*Halichos Shlomo Pesach* 5:6) ruled similarly.

15. S.A. and Rama 433:1-2.

16. The *sefer Bedikas Chometza U'biyuro* page 185 footnote 35 writes that this was the custom of the Brisker Rav. *Teshuvos Shevet HaLevi* 1:136 writes that he usually checked by the light of a candle only, but he switched on the house lights if it helped with the *bedika*.

17. This was the custom of the Steipler Gaon (*Orchos Rabeinu* vol. 2 page 2) and Rav Moshe Feinstein (*Shmaiteta De'Moshe – Shemuos Moshe* 433:1). Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (*Halichos Shlomo Pesach* page 110) also held that it is not necessary to turn off the house lights during the *bedika*. Similarly, Rav Elyashiv (*Ashrei Ha'Ish* O.C. vol. 3 page 361) held that it is unnecessary to turn off electric lights as they enhance the *bedika*, but he added that one should not change from the established custom to use a candle as well. See further *Hilchos Chag Be'chag, Pesach* page 79.

18. Rama 432:2 and M.B. there and S.H. 432:12. According to Rav Elyashiv (*Ashrei Ha'Ish* O.C. vol. 3 page 360), nowadays it is *halachically* necessary to put out pieces of bread.

19. The Gra *siman* 442 *paskens* that it is not necessary to put out pieces of bread, and the *Chayei Odom* 119:22 similarly states that one does not need to concern oneself. S.H. 432:11 writes that according to the Taz it is better not to put out pieces of bread, as they may get lost. The Chazon Ish did not put out pieces of bread (*Orchos Rabbeinu* vol. 2 page 2), and neither did Rav Moshe Feinstein (*Shmaiteta De'Moshe – Shemuos Moshe* 432:2).

20. Shaarei Teshuva, end of *siman* 432

21. The Steipler Gaon would place the pieces of bread himself (*Orchos Rabbeinu* vol. 2 page 2). Rav Elyashiv also did so (*Ashrei Ha'Ish* O.C. vol. 3 page 360). However, custom is that other members of the household place the pieces of bread, as indicated by the Rama 332:2 who states that the custom is to place the bread in various locations for the *bo'dek* to find. This also seems clear from the *Chok Yaakov* 332:14.

22. According to Rav Elyashiv (*Ashrei Ha'Ish* vol. 3 page 361) it is permitted to check with a thin flashlight that shines into cracks and crevices well, but one should ideally not change the custom to use a candle unless one is checking an area which is hard to examine with a candle. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (*Halichos Shlomo Pesach* page 110) and Rav Moshe Feinstein (*Shmaiteta De'Moshe – Shemuos Moshe* 433:2) held similarly.

at the time of *bedikas chometz*.<sup>23</sup> For example, clothing pockets which were cleaned well and checked beforehand do not need to be rechecked during *bedikas chometz*.<sup>24</sup> However, the person conducting the *bedika* should inquire and verify that all the pockets were, in fact, cleaned.<sup>25</sup> One should remove or sell all *chometz* at his workplace. If he owns the workplace, he should perform *bedikas chometz*, preferably on the night of the 14<sup>th</sup> of *Nissan*.

One is not obligated to move a heavy piece of furniture to check behind it for *chometz*.<sup>26</sup> However, if it is known that *chometz* is present it is customary to remove it if possible.<sup>27</sup> One is not obligated to check areas of the house into which *chometz* is never brought. However, those areas do need to be checked if children live in the house and could reach them.<sup>28</sup>

One should not speak between the *bracha* and the beginning of the *bedika*. During the *bedika*, one should only speak about things related to the search. If one did speak about non-related matters after starting the *bedika* he does not repeat the *bracha*.<sup>29</sup> If he goes to the bathroom during the *bedika*, he may recite *Asher Yatzar*.<sup>30</sup> At the conclusion of the *bedika*, *Kol Chamira* should be recited.\*

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23. See *Aishel Avraham* of Butchatch 434:1 and *Maharsham* in *Daas Torah* 433:2.

24. According to the *Chazon Ish*, if one has checked pockets well for Pesach and was careful not to put any *chometz* into them after that, they can be considered a *mokom she'ein machnisim bo chometz* (*Orchos Rabbeinu* vol. 2 page 5).

25. According to Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (*Halichos Shlomo Pesach* 5:1), the obligation to check for *chometz* on the night of the 14th remains in force even though nowadays we clean the house well beforehand. However, it is not necessary for the *bodek* to recheck everything. Rather, he should ascertain that every spot has, in fact, already been cleaned. Rav Elyashiv (*Ashrei Ha'Ish* vol. 3 pages 335-337) writes similarly.

26. It can be considered a *mokom she'ein machnisim bo chometz*.

27. See S.A. *HaGra*"z 433:19 that if *chometz* falls under the floorboards of the house it is not necessary to lift them up in order to clean underneath them, and it is sufficient for him to be *mevatel* the *chometz*. Nevertheless, Rav Heinemann says that it is customary, if possible, to clean out the *chometz*. Furthermore, if it is possible for a dog to dig out the *chometz* then it may be necessary *me'ikar hadin* to do so, see S.A. 433:8 and S.A. *HaGra*"z *Kuntres Achron* there.

28. S.A. 433:3 and M.B. 433:19

29. S.A. 432:1 and M.B. there.

30. *Psak* of Rav Elyashiv (*Ashrei Ha'Ish* vol. 3 page 361).