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## Cleaning the House before Going Away for Pesach

**Question:** We plan to spend all of Pesach with family. Do we still need to clean for Pesach and do bedikat chametz<sup>1</sup> at our home or at our host's?

**Answer:** This response assumes you will not be going home during Pesach and that you realize it is not a detailed account of your Pesach preparations. Please do not make inferences from what we omit.

People are accustomed to using the procedure of mechirat chametz<sup>2</sup> for the chametz itself, including the area of the home where the chametz is located, but not for entire homes. In truth, however, those who will be away may 'sell' their homes, rendering a full cleaning and bedika

unnecessary. Just as one does not have to destroy chametz that he has sold and no longer owns, so too, he need not check a house that is no longer under his control. Some people have the minhag not to rely upon mechirat chametz for full-fledged chametz. The rationale includes the problems inherent in mechirat chametz.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, mechirat chametz was devised for people who will incur significant financial loss if they have to destroy their chametz, which is not the case for everyone.<sup>4</sup>

In some ways our issue is more lenient and in some ways more strict.<sup>5</sup> Generally, we can say that the desire to avoid many hours of back-breaking work<sup>6</sup> is reason enough for many to want to use a legitimate halachic device. There are, however, a few problems unique to this type of sale. First of all, whereas most people can seriously sell \$100 worth of chametz and accept the possibility that the non-Jew will not sell it back, who would sell his house just to avoid checking it thoroughly for chametz? Consequently, selling the house raises questions about the seriousness of the transaction. In Israel,

<sup>1</sup> Checking the house for *chametz*.

<sup>2</sup> Sale of *chametz*.

<sup>3</sup> One of which is that it may appear fictitious.

<sup>4</sup> See a survey of the issues in *Piskei Teshuvot* 448:10.

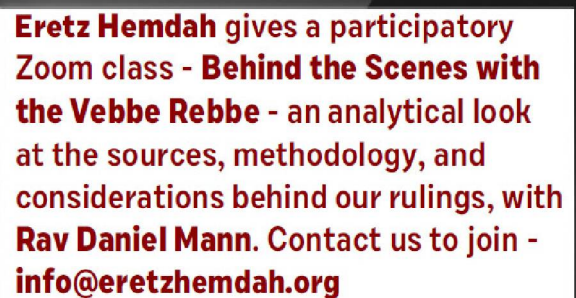
<sup>5</sup> This forum does not allow for a full discourse.

<sup>6</sup> Some of which might be halachically unnecessary in any case.

there is the additional problem of selling land to non-Jews. Therefore, it seems preferable to rent the house out for Pesach, rather than sell it.

Another issue is that according to significant opinions, one should not circumvent the obligation of bedikat chametz.<sup>7</sup> However, the Chatam Sofer<sup>8</sup> says that if one checks part of the house, he fulfills the obligation of bedikat chametz of the night of the fourteenth of Nisan. In addition, there is the matter of timing. It is necessary to sell chametz before it becomes forbidden, which is late morning of Erev Pesach. In contrast, the obligation to check the house begins on the previous night, before mechirat chametz takes place. There is a dispute whether the intention to sell one's chametz the next day is sufficient to exempt him from bedika that night.<sup>9</sup> (Remember, one's dealings with the rabbi are not to sell him the chametz but to appoint him as an agent to sell.) Therefore, it is preferable to find a rabbi who does an early sale or rental for this purpose (before the night of bedika; some call this a mechirat yud gimmel). The rabbi, aware that this is not the standard type of sale, should be able

to guide you about other issues regarding your situation, which is difficult to do in this forum. Even if one does not want to rely on the concept of a sale, he should realize that cleaning for chametz in a place where he will not be eating does not require removing insignificant crumbs or scrubbing surfaces.<sup>10</sup>



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<sup>7</sup> The *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chayim* 436:3) is stringent on the matter (of special concern for Sephardim), whereas the Rama (ad loc.) is lenient.

<sup>8</sup> *Shut Chatam Sofer, Orach Chayim* 131.

<sup>9</sup> See *Mishna Berura* 436:32.

<sup>10</sup> See *Pesachim* 6b.