

Bread Barrier

March 10, 2023

Q When my new washing machine was installed, a piece of bread was trapped underneath. What is my obligation regarding *biur* chametz?



A The Mechaber (O.C. 436:1) writes, “One who converts his house to storage within thirty days before Pesach must first check the area for chametz; before thirty days...he doesn’t need to check for chametz.” The floor beneath a heavy appliance is inaccessible and therefore similar to storage. (If the appliances can be easily moved, the area should be checked during *bedikah*.) The reason for this is that the obligation of *biur* chametz begins thirty days before Pesach. If an area becomes inaccessible before then, there is no obligation, and the *kol chamira* declaration of Erev Pesach will suffice to nullify any chametz that may be there (Mishnah Brurah *ibid.* 15).

According to some *Acharonim*, one must clear out a storage space—even if converted before thirty days—if it is known that chametz is buried there, like in your case (Mishnah Brurah *ibid.* 15).

Because a non-Jew’s chametz may be kept in a Jew’s house on Pesach, and people customarily sell their chametz to a non-Jew before Pesach, there is additional basis for leniency even if the washer was installed in the thirty days before Pesach. Although Chazal still require a barrier between the dwellers and the chametz (Psachim 6a, O.C. 440:2), a heavy appliance serves as that barrier.

According to some *Acharonim* (quoted in Mishnah Brurah 448:12), a Jew’s own chametz that was sold to a gentile to avoid transgression needs a higher level of distance. It must be removed from the premises, or the area of the chametz must be rented to the non-Jew, making it his domain. (*Mechiras* chametz contracts contain clauses that address this.)

This would not be an option in your case if the laundry area will be used by the household during Pesach (for children; see O.C. 534:1). The Chazon Ish (O.C. 124:1) sides with the lenient opinion.