



Melabein

BRUSHING CLOTHING AND TAKING OUT STAINS

6. BRUSHING OUT DUST AND CHALK FROM CLOTHING

A1) If a **disturbing amount** of dust, soot, flour etc. has gone into the cloth, it may **not** be dusted out on Shabbos (ossur min Hatorah). Examples of this are i) to brush a hat or garment that is dusty ii) to brush a garment which has fallen onto the floor, iii) to bang or brush a doormat or rug so that it looks cleaner iv) to brush suede shoes which have become dusty from loose soil or sand v) to brush out footprints marks from a couch or garment that a child has stepped on vi) to brush away chalk which has made a garment white after leaning on a white-washed wall vii) to brush away flour, chalk, baby powder, scouring powder, cocoa, cinnamon, icing sugar, custard powder etc. that has spilt onto a skirt etc.

The Poskim strongly recommend that a person cover his garment with a towel or similar piece of cloth before sitting a child on his lap, since a lot of dust could come onto his clothes from the child's shoes, dusty knees, etc. Similarly, women who are sprinkling cakes with icing sugar are recommended to wear a housecoat, overall etc. and before a mother uses talcum powder on the baby she should make sure that her clothing are well protected. The Poskim likewise warn men to hang their hats and coats in a safe place where they will not fall onto the floor since even a clean floor can make a coat, hat etc. very dusty.

2a) If there is only a **little bit** of dust on the garment – and it does **not** spoil its appearance, it **may** be brushed out on Shabbos. Therefore if the garment is basically clean and the person would **not** be embarrassed to be seen in public with the dust on it, the dust may be brushed out. (This is because melabein done by 'brushing out stains or dust' is only called Melabein when it brings a **big improvement** to the garment. However if it brings only a **minor improvement** it is allowed. This is unlike laundering by 'washing' which is not allowed even if it brings about only a very **minor improvement**.)

b) Whether the dust spoils the garments appearance depends on the **attitude of the owner** not on people's general opinion. Therefore Person A who would **not** wear the slightly dusty garment may **not** brush out the dust and Person B who **would** wear

the slightly dusty garment **may** brush out the dust. (This is because for Person A, taking out the dust is an important and significant act of cleaning and is not allowed. However for Person B it is an insignificant act of cleaning and is allowed.) The Poskim say that Person B who does **not** care about the dust is **not** allowed to brush out a garment for Person A who does care.

3) It is sometimes difficult for a person to decide whether he would wear the dusty garment (even though, he would definitely dust it if he had the facilities available). To help a person to decide, Chazal give the following guidelines:

a) If a garment is **dark coloured** and **still looks new** it is spoiled by an average amount of dust and a person would **not** usually wear it until it had been dusted. E.g. a dark new looking suit, hat, coat etc. that have gotten dusty, may only be brushed out if the person is **certain** that he doesn't mind to wear it in its dusty state.

b) If a garment is **light coloured** or **doesn't look new anymore**, an **average amount** of dust usually doesn't disturb and a person may brush it away **unless** he knows that it disturbs him.

c) If a **large amount** of dust or **coloured dust** e.g. cinnamon has fallen on a light coloured garment, it is natural to be very particular and one may **not** brush it away.

4) One is allowed to take feathers, fluff, splinters etc. out of a garment even if they are stuck into the weave of the material. (This is since they remain distinctly separate and don't mix in with the material.) These items should be taken out in an unusual way since they are useless and therefore Muktzah.

B) The Poskim record a Minhag not to use a clothes brush (to remind people that brushing out dust could be Ossur min Hatorah). Therefore when dust is allowed to be brushed out of clothing it should be banged out by hand or shaken thoroughly but it should not be brushed down with a clothes brush.

C) 1) One **may** ask a non-Jew to brush out a garment **even** if it is very dusty. He may brush it with a clothes brush or by hand.

2) If a person's coat, jacket, or hat has fallen onto the floor in a way that:

a) it is **very** dusty, to the point that it would be **very** embarrassing to wear it like that and
b) No non Jew is available to brush it down, **some** Poskim allow the person to brush the dust away himself, **as long as** he does it in a very unusual manner such as to brush

the garment or hat with his elbow or against his knee. One should **not** brush it using the end of the sleeve as people often brush away dust etc. like this.

If it is **not very** embarrassing to wear the dusty garment, (and there is no non-Jew available to clean it) although there might be some degree of embarrassment, the person should wear the garment as it is and pride himself that he is wearing this garment because he keeps the Halachos of Shabbos and is concerned for Kedushas Shabbos.

CLEANING A CARPET ON SHABBOS

D1) It is Melabein to wash or take out stains from a carpet. However, to remove bits of **loose foods** such as bread or Matza crumbs is not Melabein (as they stay separate bits of dirt and do not "blend" with the actual material).

2) A dusty carpet that looks unclean to the point that one would be ashamed to bring visitors into the room, may **not** be dusted. The darker the carpet the more quickly dust makes it looks dirty and a person must make sure to judge carefully and correctly. If there has been a Kiddush, Shalom Zochor, reception etc. at home, it is very likely that the carpet has been dirtied by many people walking over it and the many types of foods that have fallen onto the floor and to clean it could be Ossur Min Hatorah.

Even if the carpet still looks **basically clean**, and is allowed to be swept, after sweeping a couple of yards, a little mound of dust, will have gathered. The part of the carpet underneath the mound will become thoroughly dusty and may not be swept out of the carpet. To overcome this problem, a person could use a brush with a pan and pick up the dust of this basically clean carpet before it becomes a pile, but it is troublesome to do so, and it is therefore advisable to ask a non-Jew to sweep the carpet. If no non-Jew is available, it is best to just brush the carpet superficially so that the bits of food that are on it are picked up, and the dust that has gone into the carpet should be left to be brushed out after Shabbos.

3a) A hand operated carpet sweeper should **not** be used on Shabbos, (since it tears fibres out of the carpets).

b) A non Jew **may** use a hand operated carpet sweeper, but he may not use an electric vacuum cleaner since noisy machinery may not be switched on in a Jewish house on Shabbos.

4) One **may** brush crumbs from a tablecloth with a "crumb sweeper" – a miniature type of carpet sweeper (since it doesn't tear out fibres). One may even use this type of crumb sweeper on the carpet to sweep up bits of crumbs, matzo etc.