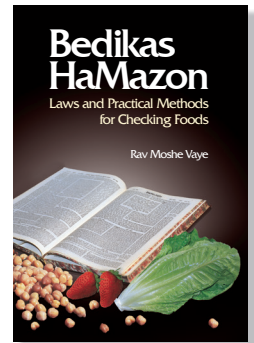


INFORMATION SHEET Schach Infestation

based on Rav Moshe Vaye's sefer Bedikas HaMazon



The Aruch Laner in his sefer on Maseches Sukkah (תוספת ביכורים ערוך לנר סי' תר"נ), warns against hanging flowers from the schach, since insects present in the flowers may fall into food while eating in the sukkah, "and this would cause the mitzvah of sukkah to become a 'mitzvah haba'ah be'aveirah'; as one consumes insects together with his food".

A similar issue is relevant nowadays, as certain types of schach have been found to harbor various insects. As it has been observed, those insects tend to drop from the schach, and are liable to fall into food below. But with the proper precautions, we can protect ourselves and not cause the mitzvas Sukkah, to be a 'mitzvah haba'ah be'aveirah'.

Both new and old schach could be checked for infestation.

Description of Infestation

Schach mats such as "kaynes" (bamboo reeds), may harbor various insects, especially lyctus and book-lice.

- Lyctus is a small dark brown insect, 3 mm. long. The larvae bore thin "tunnels" inside the reeds. Infested schach have visible round holes on them, and tunnels can be seen under the thin upper layer with dark "pupae" and lots of dust in them [see illustration 3].
- Book-lice are small (approximately 1 mm long), grayish or off-white (slightly translucent) [see illustration 4].

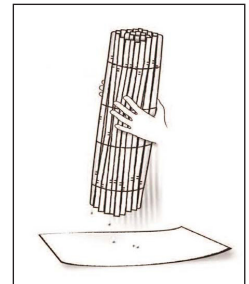


Illustration 1

Checking your Schach for Infestation

Raise the schach in an upright position, and shake it forcefully over a clean white surface (e.g. white cloth, paper towel or a sheet of white paper). While much dust and wood chips will usually be seen on the paper, keep an eye out for any movement. [see illustration 1].

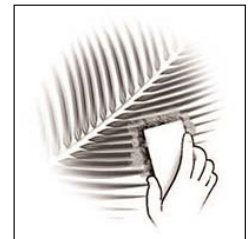


Illustration 2

Cleaning your Schach

If insects are detected:

- If only a few insects are detected, it is sufficient to just shake the schach until no insects are found.
- If many insects are found, take the following steps:
 1. Spray the schach with an insect spray (e.g. "Raid" House and Garden Bug Killer¹) following instructions on the spray [see illustration 5], and seal airtight (e.g. plastic cover or plastic tablecloth tightly sealed with tape) for about 8 hours. It is recommended that schach should be sprayed from both sides.
 2. Rinse the schach on both sides with a strong stream of water (e.g. a garden hose) and let it dry.
 3. If rinsing with water is not possible, the schach can be cleaned by vacuuming both sides well. If possible, it is strongly recommended to use both methods, rinsing with running water and vacuuming after schach is dried.
 4. If there is a heavy infestation of lyctus, it is recommended not to use the schach at all.



Illustration 3

Green fresh schach, such as palm branches or leafy tree branches, may harbor the same small insects that are commonly found on green leaves, such as aphids, thrips etc. Palm branches can be cleaned by brushing both sides of each branch with soapy water, rinse well with running water [see ill. 2]. Leafy tree branches are difficult to clean, therefore if found to be infested it should not be used.



Illustration 4

Storage of Schach

Proper storage of schach, will help prevent future infestation.

- A. Schach should be completely dry before storing.
- B. Spray the schach with insect spray, and leave to dry.
- C. It is recommended to spread moth balls on schach, and store the schach with moth balls.
- D. Wrap the schach with an airtight wrapper, and seal with tape.
- E. Store in a dry place.

Before using the schach again, check for infestation following the above instructions.

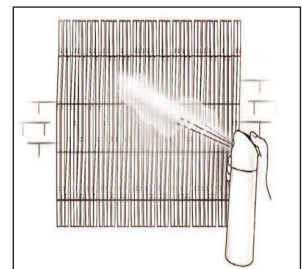


Illustration 5

1. Available at House and Home in Williamsburg, Fried's Hardware on 18th Ave. in Boro Park and other hardware stores, as well as at Walgreens, CVS etc.

For more detailed explanations with photos that show the various types of infestation, see HaRav Vaye's sefer "Bedikas Hamazon" in English.

For those living in Beit Shemesh the sefer can also be purchased from Mrs. Yehudis Sirkis (phone 054-853-2905) or www.feldheim.com
Answers to phone queries: from 10:45 to 11:45 a.m. and p.m. and on Friday from 2:00p.m. until 30 minutes before Shabbos at (02) 532-5588.

Rav Vaye's shiurim can be heard on Kol Haloshon at (03) 6171039 or www.kolhalashon.com

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