



***City Eruvin:  
The Rebbe's  
View***



# The Rebbe's Directives Regarding eruv

## Introduction

The Rebbe's position against the establishment of city eruvim has been long recognized, not only among Chassidim, but across the broader frum community. Many have attested to the fact that this was common knowledge in the United States.

This position was even documented in several prominent Torah journals which the Rebbe received. In 5739 (1979), the HaPardes Journal published a lecture by Rabbi **Simcha Elberg**, a close associate of the Rebbe, in which he emphasized the Rebbe's opposition to city eruvim.<sup>1)</sup> (Likewise, Rabbi **Leibel Schapiro** heard him voice this in opposition to the construction of an eruv in North Miami Beach, FL). Likewise, in notice by Agudas HaRabbanim published in HaPardes, it mentions that the Rebbe is opposed to city eruvim.<sup>2)</sup> In the HaMaor Journal from 5741 (1981), Rabbi **Meir Amsel** cites the Rebbe among those known to oppose eruvim in places like Manhattan and Brooklyn.<sup>3)</sup>

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1) Year 53, Pamphlet 8, Iyar 5739, pg. 25. "Who are the ones in our country who cry out to correct Shabbos by constructing eruvim to enable shemiras Shabbos? It is not the great rabbonim, roshei yeshiva and Rebbes of Satmar, Lubavitch, Bluzhev, and Bobov - who all staunchly oppose the eruv for their reasons."

2) Year 53, Pamphlet 4, Teves 5739, pg. 26: "In recent weeks, the Agudas Harabbonim held several consultations with the participation of great rabbonim and roshei yeshiva, discussing the issue of the eruvim that arose due to the renewed attempts of several modern rabbis to establish eruvim in cities and certain areas, etc., to make it easier for the masses to carry on Shabbos. Agudas Harabbonim has been warning for many years about the potential chillul Shabbos that could come from setting up eruvim." And it continues in HaPardes: "About the warning of the Agudas Harabbonim not to profane the sanctity of Shabbos by setting up eruvim, most of the great rabbonim from all circles, from Satmar to Lubavitch, Chassidim and Litvish, and all the Chassidic Rebbes, signed in agreement."

3) Year 33, Pamphlet 2, pg. 23.

In Kislev 5739 (1979), a public proclamation against eruv in metropolises was signed by several rabbonim, including Chabad rabbonim R' **Zalman Shimon Dworkin** and R' **Meir Greenberg**.

A few months later, a notice against the Flatbush eruv appeared in the "Jewish Press," signed by multiple Chabad rabbonim: R' **Zalman Shimon Dworkin**, R' **Meir Greenberg**, R' **Chaim Meir Bukiet**, R' **Yitzchok Ushpol**, and R' **Shlomo Aaron Kazarnovsky**. It is self understood that these rabbonim signed with knowledge of the Rebbe's position against city eruv.

The Chabad position against the establishment of city eruv was so widespread, that when Rabbi **Asher Herson** received permission from the Rebbe in 5753 (1993) to establish an eruv in the area where he was a shliach (Rockaway, NJ), he couldn't find another shliach with experience in making an eruv, nor were there Lubavitcher rabbonim who ever constructed a city eruv. He was forced to ask the Rebbe if he could seek assistance from a non-Lubavitcher rov to build it.

Recently, a handwritten response from the Rebbe regarding the construction of an eruv in Melbourne was published, explicitly stating that "my opinion is **well-known**" against the establishment of eruv, calling it a "terrible stumbling block." This shows clearly that the Rebbe's opposition to eruv in large cities was not a new concept but has been a long-standing and well-known position.

Indeed, Rabbi **Yehuda Leib Groner** and Reb **Yoel Kahan** confirmed the Rebbe's stance against creating and using an eruv in large cities.

This compilation includes numerous responses from the Rebbe that have come to our attention. Special thanks to Rabbi **Nochum Zajac** for his extensive research on this topic, and for sharing with us material from his collection.

May we merit to follow the Rebbe's directives in their full sense and bring Moshiach speedily in our days.

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# The Rebbe's Letter

To begin, it would be appropriate to bring a letter from the Rebbe from Chol HaMoed Pesach 5724 (1964). In this letter, addressed to rabbonim in Manhattan, the Rebbe elaborates on his position regarding city eruv.

The letter was first published by Reb **Shalom Ber Shapiro** from the archives of his father-in-law Reb **Nissan Mindel** and appeared in the series "The Letter and The Spirit."

In addition to this letter, Rabbi Shapiro shared another letter that is identical to this one, besides for the first paragraph. At first glance, it seems like two drafts of the same letter, but Rabbi Shapiro confirmed that the letters were written to two different rabbonim in Manhattan who had connections with the Rebbe. He added that he possesses more letters on this subject which will be published soon, IYH.

The letter was written during Chol HaMoed, a time when the Rebbe would not engage in correspondence (as noted in the letter), highlighting the urgency and importance of this matter to the Rebbe.

From the beginning of the second letter, it is clear that a group of rabbonim sought to understand the Rebbe's stance on the Manhattan eruv:

Shalom U'Brachah:

My brother-in-law RSG <sup>4)</sup> informed me yesterday of your desire to discuss with me in the presence of your colleagues the question of an Eiruv for Manhattan. Although because of the sanctity of Chol HaMoed my correspondence is generally suspended during these intermediate days I hasten to convey to you my views on this matter.

Here is the full text of the Rebbe's first letter:

As you will surely recall, the matter was raised a few years ago when I expressed my position, which has not changed. However, since I do not know if you are fully informed of it, I will reiterate the main points of my viewpoint relative to this matter.

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4) Rabbi Shmaryahu Gurary (Rashag).

Firstly, as a matter of principle, my opinion is that where according to the din an Eiruv can be instituted, it should be instituted. This is based on the opinion of many poskim, including that of Admor HaZaken in his Shulchan Aruch.

Secondly, special consideration has to be given to the state of affairs and attitudes in respect of the observance of the mitzvos in the present day and age, which has a particular bearing on the problem under discussion. I have in mind the precaution which such an Eiruv calls for under the best of circumstances and certainly here and now against the possibility of the Eiruv becoming posul. In the olden days, when there was a close contact between the Jewish community (“the man in the street”) and the Beth Din or Rav, the invalidation of the Eiruv and the consequent resumption of the pre-Eiruv state of the prohibition of carrying on Shabbos could be fairly easily communicated to the “man in the street” and no harm was done. Nowadays, unfortunately, the position is different. While the institution of the Eiruv would quickly become common knowledge, not only through various media of communication but also by word of mouth, the suspension and temporary rescinding of it in case of its invalidation would only reach those who are in contact with the Rabbinical authorities or who attend the synagogue regularly, whereas many would remain in ignorance of the changed situation. Moreover, many of those who might get into the habit of carrying on Shabbos on the strength of the Eiruv might not so readily discontinue to do so even if they became aware of the breakdown in the Eiruv; and this contingency is particularly to be considered in relation to the Jewish youth in this country.

In view of the above, it is an absolute necessity, in my opinion, that the Eiruv, if one is feasible at all according to din, should be carried out in the utmost secrecy. This means that the purpose of the Eiruv would be not to enable a Jew to carry his tallis to shul on Shabbos but only to relieve those who already transgress the Shabbos by carrying things from doing so b'issur.

Thirdly, and this too is an essential point in my position. The opinion expressed in the first conditional paragraph, namely that where an Eiruv is permissible according to the din, it should be

instituted, is based, of course, on the general principle indicated above. However, it expresses no opinion regarding any particular place, such as Manhattan in this case, as to whether or not it indeed qualifies for an Eiruv according to the din. This is a matter to be decided by the Rabbinical authorities who have thoroughly investigated the pertinent details in full accord with the Hilchos Eiruvim.

Fourthly, assuming that it be agreed that the Eiruv should be instituted without publicity as above, the question may be asked whether it would be warranted to follow the more lenient view of some “poskim” regarding the qualifications of the place in order to remove the transgression of those who carry in any case (inasmuch as the Eiruv would not be intended to induce the Shabbos observer to carry on Shabbos). However, this would not be right, in my opinion, for two important reasons: a) a Rav or Rabbinical authority should always act only in strict adherence to the Shulchan Aruch in every detail; and b) it is inevitable that the existence of an Eiruv should not become known to limited circles with the result that some individuals would be tempted to accept it on its face value, especially in this country where there is a strong tendency to find hetterim and make religious observance more “convenient.” Hence it is my considered opinion that not only should the Eiruv be done in the utmost secrecy but that it should be done only if the place strictly qualifies for it in accordance with the din.

I take this opportunity to extend to you and yours my prayerful wishes for a continued kosher and happy Pesach.

With blessing

*(by reason of Chol HaMoed this letter is left unsigned)*

This letter indicates that the Rebbe’s view on the matter had been expressed several years earlier and had not changed. The Rebbe’s stance is clear that an eruv must be strictly kosher, without leniencies in Halacha. As the Rebbe wrote, “a Rav or Rabbinical authority should always act only in strict adherence to the Shulchan Aruch in every detail.”

Regarding the construction of an eruv, the Rebbe wrote: “The

purpose of the eruv would not be to enable a Jew to carry his tallis to shul on Shabbos but only to relieve those who already transgress the Shabbos by carrying things from doing so *b'issur*." It is clear that there no ideal to create an eruv to permit carrying, and, even after it is constructe, it is preferable that carrying is not done. Thus, an eruv constructed to prevent people who are carrying from transgressing, it should be done wihout anyone knowing.

# Directives from the Rebbe to Community Leaders

## 1. Crown Heights

In the Rebbe's shechuna, Crown Heights, an eruv was never constructed, and it was well known that this was at the Rebbe's instructions.

Mrs. **Rivka Chitrik** related that when her husband, Rabbi **Tzvi Hirsch Chitrik** a"h, was a member of the Vaas Hakohol in the 5730s (1970s), he wanted to put up an eruv in the community. But when he asked the Rebbe about it, the Rebbe strongly opposed it.

This was confirmed by family members (Rabbi **Yosef Yitzchok Chitrik** and others) who recall how their father wished to establish an eruv in Crown Heights but stopped pursuing it after a certain point. Several grandchildren heard from him explicitly that the Rebbe firmly opposed the establishment of an eruv in Crown Heights.

## 2. Detroit, Michigan

In the 1970s, the question of establishing an eruv came up almost annually at meetings of the rabbinical council of Greater Detroit. Each time, they voted against it by majority. In 1980, however, a majority of rabbonim chose to establish an eruv<sup>5)</sup>.

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5) As heard from Rabbi **Yissachar Wolf**, who is in charge of the Oak Park eruv under the rabbinical council.

On two occasions, the Rebbe instructed to avoid establishing an eruv:

When Rabbi **Yaakov Krantz** was on shlichus in Detroit, he was also a member of the local rabbinical council. When the discussion about building an eruv arose, he asked the Rebbe in *yechidus* what to do. The Rebbe answered <sup>6)</sup>:

“Vote against the building of the eruv. The reason is that if someone comes from a place with an eruv to a place without an eruv, they will continue to carry, leading to a disregard for the prohibition of carrying on Shabbos.

“Even though there were eruvin in some large towns in the past, the situation is different now. In the past, people stayed in one place, and if there was an eruv, they carried in that place. But nowadays, people are mobile and travel from place to place. If people get used to carrying where there is an eruv, they will carry where there is no eruv.

“Some ask that since people carry anyway, building an eruv would save them from sinning, so it might be worth building an eruv. The answer is that it is certainly worth establishing an eruv in secrecy. When there was a discussion about building an eruv in Manhattan, there was a suggestion to establish an eruv secretly without anyone knowing about it. Then, there are two advantages: there is no concern of disregarding Shabbos because observant Yidden won’t carry, and those who carry won’t be transgressing.”

Several years after Rabbi Krantz left the area, the issue came up again. Rabbi **Elimelech Yosef Silberg** and Rabbi **Chaim Moshe Bergstein** asked the Rebbe, who responded again to avoid establishing an eruv.

### 3. Melbourne, Australia

In 5741 (1981), a proposal was made to establish an eruv in Melbourne. Rabbi **Yitzchok Dovid Groner**, shliach and Rov of the Chabad community, inquired about this proposal from the Rebbe. The

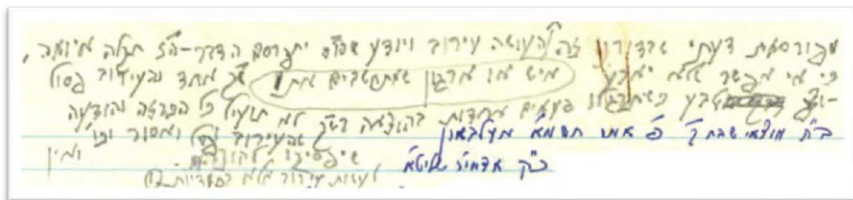
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6) This was related over by Rabbi **Yehuda Leib Shapiro** – Rosh Yeshiva and Rov of the Chabad community in Miami.



question posed was regarding the general idea of establishing an eruv, even before any specific plans were made<sup>7)</sup>.

Rabbi Groner received a response from the Rebbe (Motzaei Shabbos Parshas Emor, 5 Iyar, 5741) in the following words (in the Rebbe's own handwriting)<sup>8)</sup>:



“My opinion is well-known that in our generation, if recognized individual or organization establishes an eruv, knowing that it will eventually become public knowledge, it is a terrible stumbling block. It is inevitable that one Shabbos the eruv will be invalid, and it is natural that once people get used to carrying on Shabbos, no declaration or announcement that the eruv is invalid will stop them from carrying. Therefore, an eruv should only be established in secrecy.”

When Rabbi Groner received this response, he consulted with other rabbonim in the city, and they issued a proclamation from all the rabbonim in the city against establishing an eruv. As a result, no eruv was established there for several years.

After some time passed, the proposal to establish an eruv came up again. Several community members (not from Anash) stated that if the local rabbonim did not agree to build an eruv, they would bring in a rav from outside to build it. The rabbonim then consulted among themselves, and Rabbi Groner again sent a question to the Rebbe asking if they should continue to oppose the establishment of the eruv or if it was better to stay out of it.

7) Many Anash from Melbourne testified about this, including Rabbi **Mottel Krasnianski**, who worked on it together with Rabbi Groner, and even published a pamphlet on eruvim in 5748 (1988) in collaboration with Rabbi Groner.

8) First published in Kuntres Tzadik L'Melech, volume 7, page 226.



communities who rely on it.]

## 4. West Hartford, Connecticut

Rabbi **Yosef Gopin** of West Hartford, Connecticut, relates:

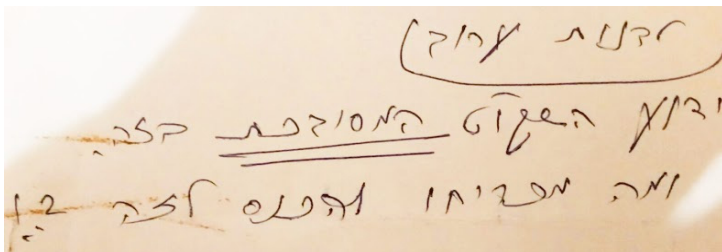
In 5743 (1983), a group of rabbonim began discussing making an eruv in our city of West Hartford, Connecticut, and pressured me to join. I wrote a note to the Rebbe asking how to respond: Should I join, oppose, or avoid involvement? The response was to avoid involvement. The Rebbe underlined the word “avoid.”

At that time, Reb Leibel Groner told me that he knew the Rebbe had already responded to several shluchim about this matter, one of whom was Reb Yankel Kranz. I contacted him, and he told me he had a *yechidus* with the Rebbe, who gave several reasons not to establish an eruv. At that time, it was very clear that the Rebbe did not support establishing an eruv.

## 5. Doncaster, Australia

In 5745 (1985), a proposal was made to establish an eruv in the Doncaster neighborhood (a suburb outside Melbourne). Reb **Mordechai Zev Gutnick**, who was the rav there, wrote about this to the Rebbe and received the following response<sup>9</sup>:

“It is well known the **complex** discussions (*shakla v'tarya*) in this matter, and what compels you to get involved in this?!”



## 6. Montreal, Canada

Harav **Yitzchok Hendel**, was the Rov of the Chabad community

9) From Teshura Horowitz-Borenstein, 22 Sivan 5776 (2016), pg. 55.

in Montreal and one of the city's prominent rabbonim. At that time, there was a significant controversy in Montreal about the eruv, and one of the notable rabbonim with whom Harav Hendel was friendly was involved in its establishment. When Harav Hendel had his next *yechidus*, he asked if he should help establish an eruv in the city.

The Rebbe instructed him not to support it, but also not to oppose that Rov.

The question and answer were as follows as heard directly from him by Harav **Sholom Ber Chaikin** of Cleveland, Ohio <sup>10)</sup>:

Should I work to establish an eruv in the city?

The Rebbe instructed me to avoid it for the following reasons:

1. In America, people are accustomed to moving frequently, and from one area to another, and the residents won't realize that in their new residence there is no eruv, and they will act as usual, carrying on Shabbos, *chas veshalom*.
2. Since towns are divided into different neighborhoods, residents of the permitted area won't notice the eruv boundaries, where the eruv ends, and will continue carrying from one neighborhood to another, *ch"v*.
3. When the eruv is established, it is possible to ensure that the *mashgiach* and person in charge of the eruv are reliable, but over time, this might change, and it could fall into the hands of someone who is not reliable, *ch"v*.

The above was also confirmed by Harav **Dovid Raphael Banon** of Montreal who also heard it from Harav Hendel. Harav **Berel Bell** of Montreal also testified that he explicitly heard from Harav Hendel that the Rebbe was against the establishment of eruvim.

Harav **Yosef Yitzchok Feigelstock** from Buenos Aires, Argentina, wrote: "[Harav Hendel] taught me about making the eruv at Camp Gan Yisroel, and told me that it was kosher according to all opinions, and it was a mitzvah to establish an eruv there. There was a section of the

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10) Sefer Mamleches Kohanim by Rabbi **Yisroel Yosef Hendel**, siman 25, pg. 27. Hiskashrus, issue 665, from Rabbi **Sholom Ber Chaikin** (from Cleveland, Ohio), who heard this straight from Rabbi Hendel a"h.

camp that was left unenclosed [a necessary feature for city eruv], and it followed the stricter opinion of the Rambam<sup>10</sup>[requiring a post every 10 amos]. A city eruv, on the other hand, relies on all the leniencies together, and the Rebbe told Harav Hendel not to permit it but also not to forbid it. The type of eruv that they are discussing [where there are wide streets but not 600,000 people], the Alter Rebbe writes about it not to call them *mechalelei Shabbos*, yet not to permit the eruv..."

We see here the difference between a summer camp and the like<sup>12</sup>, where the Rebbe's opinion was favorable towards establishing an eruv (when done properly), as opposed to towns, especially large cities, where the Rebbe was very displeased with an eruv there.

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11) For an explanation of the Rambam's position, see the essay in this pamphlet entitled "A Tzurach Hapesach wider than 10 amos."

12) Regarding setting up an eruv at a summer camp properly, it is appropriate to quote a response from the Rebbe on this matter from the year 5715 (1955).

A bochur who was a student at the JTS Seminary became close to Rabbi **Berel Baumgarten** and began attending his Tanya shiurim. Rabbi Baumgarten would ask the Rebbe's advice on every step regarding this bochur. One summer, this bochur was appointed to run a Conservative camp. Rabbi Baumgarten asked the Rebbe if he should accept this position in order to introduce holiness to the camp as much as possible. This is what he asked the Rebbe:

"Avaraham Yaakov is doing tremendous work to establish in the camp under his supervision the maximum amount of *yiras Shomayim* and also strives that the kashrus of the food should be, at least, kosher *b'dieved*, so that there should not be any doubt of *neveilos* and *treifos*. Since his knowledge in such matters is very limited, I advised him to stay in constant contact with me. He also wishes to establish an eruv so that those who deliberately carry on Shabbos should not stumble, and certainly not those who do so unintentionally or simply don't know better. But a road passes through the middle of the camp, and he doesn't know how to make the proper posts. The entire idea of requiring posts was foreign to him; he thought one could just string a wire from house to house and from tree to tree without any posts, etc."

At the end of the letter, the Rebbe responded (23 Iyar 5715): "Regarding the eruv - ask in detail by R' **Yonasan Shteif** or R' **Binyomin Moshkovitch**, who deal with these halachos."

## 7. Cincinnati, Ohio

Harav **Ezriel Zelig Sharfstein** was a shliach and Rov in Cincinnati, Ohio. When the question of establishing an eruv arose, he asked the Rebbe. The Rebbe instructed him to avoid it because people would come to carry where there is no eruv, and over time, it might fall into the hands of someone who is not reliable.<sup>13)</sup>

After some time, several city residents (not from Anash) pressured him to build an eruv, saying that if he refused, they would bring someone down on their own to build it for them. The Rebbe then agreed that he should build the eruv and gave him two instructions: 1) to review *hilchos eruvin*, 2) to bring an expert in eruvin to help build it.

## 8. Yagdil Torah Journal

Rabbi **Sholom Dovber Levin**, author of many seforim and head of the Rebbe's library, shared:

"In my work on the Torah journal 'Yagdil Torah,' published by the Kollel under the Rebbe's Mazkirus, I collected various halachic articles from the Rebbe to include in the journal. Before each publication, I presented my proposals to the Rebbe for approval.

"In 5742 (1982), there was a significant controversy about building eruvin in Brooklyn. I then submitted a response the Rebbe wrote about the conditions under which a city could have an eruv – that it is not a *reshus horabim*, and that the place is suitable. However, the Rebbe instructed me not to include it in that publication."

Here is the Rebbe's wording in his letter:

... לפעמים קרובות מחלקלל, ורואין במחשך שההכרזה על דבר זה (א) בימינו מגיע רק למיעוט ב) מעטים מהם שימנעו עצמם על ידי זה (לאחרי שהורגלו כמה וכמה שבתות). ולכן (במקום שאין רשות הרבים דאורייתא ומתאים לעירוב וכו') כדאי לעשות כמאמר חז"ל בזה – ובתנאי שלא לפרסם על דבר זה כלל.

"Oftentimes the eruv becomes invalid, and we see **clearly** that an announcement about this a) in our times reaches only a minority

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13) Heard from Rabbi **Sholom DovBer Chaikin** (as mentioned in Hiskashrus, loc. Cit.), and Rabbi **Avraham Zev Sharfstein** in the name of his father.

b) few of them will refrain because of this (after they have become accustomed to carrying for several Shabbosim). Therefore (in a place that is not a *reshus horabim min haTorah* and is suitable for an eruv, etc.), it is worthwhile to do as our Sages said in this matter – but on the condition that it is not publicized at all.”

Rabbi Levin concludes:

“It is clear from the letter – which was approved by the Rebbe – that the Rebbe recognized the existence of a *reshus horabim* in our times and felt the need to specify it as an issue to avoid. Even when these conditions are met, the Rebbe expressed concern that people would continue to carry even when the eruv is invalid, and therefore allowed its construction only in complete secrecy.”

[Regarding the matter of a *reshus horabim* in our times, this is also evident from the Rebbe’s letter to Harav **Eisenstadt** about the eruv in Manhattan, where he stated that if not for the barriers of the tollbooths, it would be a *reshus horabim min haTorah* (even though the 600,000 are spread across many streets, and the street does not run in straight line from gate to gate, and there are walls from the houses).

It is especially noteworthy what the Rebbe said on Yud Beis Tammuz 5745 (1985) that this that it says in Shulchan Aruch that “we don’t have a *reshus horabim* in our times” is obviously not applicable nowadays, since, there are clearly certain places where 600,000 people go, and they are to be considered a *reshus horabim min haTorah*! <sup>14)</sup>]

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14) A translation of the exact wording of the recording of the sicha (fourth sicha):

"There was a claim, a tumult, how could it be that we’ve started talking about the Sheva Mitzvos Bnei Noach when the Rambam has already paskened a clear halacha, that a Jew is obligated to ensure that a non-Jew fulfills the Sheva Mitzvos Bnei Noach – how is it possible that it wasn’t done earlier?

"This is similar to a halacha that has become relevant today. There is a halacha in Shulchan Aruch, and the Alter Rebbe brings it down as well, that we pasken that nowadays there is no city that qualifies as a *reshus horabim min haTorah*, because there isn’t a city where 600,000 pass through it.

"Therefore, **when the question arose in a city where 600,000 people**

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## 9. New York

Reb **Yosef Dovid Moshkovitch**, the Shatzer Rebbe, lived in New York and authored a pamphlet on establishing eruv in Manhattan. He suggested several ways he believed it was possible to establish an eruv and wrote to the Rebbe that they followed his suggestions. He wanted to publicize the eruv, thinking it would save those who carry on Shabbos from *intending* to sin [since even if there's an eruv, it's still a transgression to carry if one thinks that there is no an eruv]. To prevent Shabbos observant Jews from carrying, he planned to include a warning not to rely on the eruv.

In the Rebbe's letter to him, the Rebbe wrote that it should not be publicized at all that an eruv was established (which according to him was kosher) because it could lead to breaches in halacha that could not be repaired later. The warning in the pamphlet would not help because the public accepts any leniency they find.

Here is the Rebbe's wording (1 Adar 5718)<sup>15</sup>:

"It is clear to me, absolutely and firmly, that it should not be printed or publicized in any other way that the matter is complete and the eruv has been established (at least according to his opinion).

"What you write at the end of the pamphlet about the benefit of publicizing – to save even those who intend to sin – surely even

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**clearly pass through**, people wanted to interpret the Shulchan Aruch as saying that since in the time of the Shulchan Aruch there was no such city, this is a sign that there never will be such a city. Even though **he is standing in such a city**, and he counts again- (or the police count for him), **and they've counted again, that 600,000 people pass through it**, and even more than 600,000.

"What does this have to do with a halacha in Shulchan Aruch? The Shulchan Aruch itself warns that this isn't a *chok*, it is simply that because there aren't 600,000 people passing through, therefore there is no *reshus harabim min haTorah*. But when for whatever reason there comes a city where 600,000 or more pass through, there is no question – it's an absolute certainty that this is a *reshus harabim de'Oraisa*. You only need to be certain, or at least know beyond a doubt, that there are 600,000 there."

15) Igros Kodesh, vol. 16, letter 6084.



he can estimate how many of those intentional sinners – study or even just know about such books and pamphlets,

“But regarding those who observe Torah and mitzvos, who are the ones Chazal said ‘they permit for themselves (if they find any basis or pretext for it),’ publicizing this matter is likely to bring them to breaches, etc. After the publicizing, it will be beyond repair, even if they want to.

“For the strong warning at the beginning of the booklet - we have already seen clearly that it doesn't help for that which is printed and publicized, since unfortunately the approach of preferring leniencies has become widespread. Especially in this country where the improper rabbis (רע-בנים) are standing guard - against Hashem and His Torah - to breach the wall of religion and Yiddishkeit.”

## 10. “The Local Rabbonim Should Decide”

The following *maineh* was written in Elul 5742 (1982) to Harav **Gavriel Zinner**, regarding his suggestion that the Rebbe issue a directive to build eruvin in various towns (perhaps for the shluchim).

From the Rebbe's response, we see that the Rebbe was concerned about the potential pitfalls and left it to the local rabbonim to decide whether establishing an eruv would enhance Shabbos observance or the opposite. The Rebbe also cautions that where there is an eruv, it must be ensured to be unquestionably kosher.

Here is the Rebbe's response:

“Regarding eruvin, the two extremes are well-known: 1) it is a mitzvah to seek out, etc., and one recites a bracha on it; 2) and on the other hand – even in a truly righteous generation – one must leave an area [of the city not enclosed] so that it not be forgotten [in a city eruv there's a requirement to leave part of the city out of the eruv, so one shouldn't forget that there is an prohibition to carry on shabbos], and in our generation, all the more so.

“Therefore, in my opinion, it is up to the local rabbonim who know the conditions of the place to decide what outweighs what in that

particular place – to establish or not.

“It is obvious that where there is one, there must be an effort to ensure it is according to the halacha.

“Praiseworthy is the portion of those who merit the public, and ‘If they kept one Shabbos, etc. [it would bring the redemption]’ –

“But a plea and call from my end, would need to come with an introduction (as above) that if the eruv is made according to the instructions and with the will of the *chachomim* etc. – (since this country is not like Poland of yesteryear etc.) and for several reasons there is a concern that through that the benefit will be lost etc. And that should be simple for the wise.”

## 11. Miami

From a letter to Rabbi **Pinchas Weberman**, about the eruv in Miami (3 Tammuz 5722)<sup>16)</sup>, it is understood that if an eruv is to be made anyway, it should be ensured that it is done with utmost kashrus by a rav expert in these laws.

Here are the Rebbe’s words:

“Regarding an eruv in the city, as there are many halachos about this, it should not be done without the participation of a rav expert in these laws specifically.”

In 5743 (1983), Harav **Shmuel Tuvia Stern**, built an eruv encompassing Miami Beach.

During the Yud Shevat Farbrengen, between sichos, Harav Stern approached the Rebbe and told him about the eruv he built. In the recording of the Farbrengen, one can hear the Rebbe asking him if there are 600,000 people in Miami (since if there are, one cannot make an eruv there). Rabbi Stern replied that they counted the people traveling by car (based on an estimate of three people per car) and found around 120,000 people. Furthermore, to avoid nullifying the barrier due to the highway (*sratya*), they installed gates there.

The Rebbe continued to question him about what he did near the sea and asked several times about the concern that the sea might

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16) Igros Kodesh vol. 22, letter 8457.

rise, and the eruv will be nullified, [in their eruv they relied on the dropping wall that surrounds the sea, to serve as part of the walls of the eruv, a reliable halachic leniency, assuming one doesn't have the problem of the sea rising up to the top 10 *tefachim* of the wall] <sup>17</sup>.

## 12. Philadelphia

In the early 5740s (1980s), a proposal was made to establish an eruv in Philadelphia. Rabbi **Avraham Yitzchok Shemtov**, knowing the Rebbe's view on establishing eruvin in towns, spoke with the city's rabbonim and encouraged them to avoid establishing an eruv. Indeed, for many years, no eruv was built there.

One of the community activists was very upset about the cancellation of the eruv and wrote a harsh letter to the Rebbe, claiming that the shliach imposed the "Lubavitch view" on the city's rabbonim and did nothing for Yiddishkeit in the city (except for building his Chabad House). In the Rebbe's letter, the Rebbe strongly defended the shliach and detailed many of his activities, calling on the complainant to prove his claims.

Initially, the Rebbe addressed the claim that the emissary wanted to impose the "Lubavitch view":

"Particularly puzzling is your statement, 'Do you honestly think and feel it is right for us to be subjected to only Lubavitch thinking?' Anyone who knows about Lubavitch thinking knows that 'subjecting' others is alien to it as it is alien to Torah, 'Whose ways are ways of pleasantness, and its paths are peace.'"

Regarding the eruv itself, the Rebbe wrote:

"As for your account of the Eiruv project in your city, I happen to know personally some of the senior rabbonim and younger rabbonim, and I can hardly accept the allegation that 'though all in the area were in agreement,' they permitted themselves to be overruled by one person who, according to you, has done nothing positive for Yiddishkeit in your city. Clearly, to surrender a considered Torah opinion to a veto of such an individual would

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17) See Shut Shavit vol. 7, siman 27, a note from 5738 (1978) about the leniencies in the eruv there, and his suggestions on how to correct it.

not be in keeping with the function of a Rav, much less a Vaad Horabbonim.”

From this letter, we can see the two sides of the Rebbe’s approach to establishing erubin in towns (like any other halachic issue), as we saw in the previous responses:

On the one hand, there is a preference to avoid establishing an eruv due to the halachic problems and the pitfalls associated with it. On the other hand, when it is permitted according to Halacha, there is no place to fight against it or impose Chabad stringency on other communities who follow their poskim.

### 13. The Rebbe’s Own Practice

Besides the explicit instructions mentioned above, we have seen how the Rebbe avoided supporting or instructing the construction of erubin. The Rebbe sent shluchim to many places worldwide, assigning them various tasks to strengthen Yiddishkeit in each location, in collaboration with leaders from all circles and groups, in all areas of Yiddishkeit regarding the support and strengthening of Torah. However, he never sent anyone to establish erubin.

Similarly, regarding Crown Heights – the Rebbe’s neighborhood. The issue of the eruv came up repeatedly, and many wanted to build an eruv (such as Rabbi **Hershel Chitrik**), but they refrained from doing so according to the Rebbe’s wishes and the instructions of the rabbonim at the time (Harav **Zalman Shimon Dworkin**, among others). This itself is a “Maaseh Rav” showing that the Rebbe did not want an eruv.

[Some argue that the Rebbe’s opposition to establishing erubin was due to concerns about the government’s permission at the time. However, a review of all the letters and responses mentioned above shows no reference to government permission.

Furthermore, by the 1980s, erubin had already been established in many large towns in America with government permission (Manhattan, Williamsburg, Boro Park, Flatbush, Queens, Bronx, Monsey, Baltimore, Detroit, Los Angeles, North Miami, etc.), and yet the Rebbe called it ‘a terrible stumbling block.’ In Detroit, they received full cooperation from the government at every step, and yet the Rebbe

still instructed twice not to establish an eruv.]

## 14. Eretz Yisroel

In Eretz Yisroel, even though we don't find that the Rebbe outright opposed setting up eruvin in towns, still, it was clear that he wasn't pleased with it.

In 5719 (1959), Rabbi **Naftali Rutt**, who was then one of the heads of Yeshivas Erev in Yerushalayim, had a *yechidus* with the Rebbe. Here's the story of the *yechidus* as Rabbi Rutt told it <sup>18)</sup>:

The Rebbe asked: "What about Shabbos, do Anash carry on Shabbos in Yerushalayim?"

Answer: "Generally, Anash refrain from carrying on Shabbos." (The Rebbe's face showed satisfaction.)

The Rebbe continued: "And what about the students in the Yeshivas Erev, do they carry on Shabbos?"

Answer: "There are some individuals who don't carry on Shabbos (I think I mentioned someone by the name of Freeman), but generally, they do carry on Shabbos." (It seemed that the Rebbe didn't like the fact that they were carrying on Shabbos.) I then mentioned that there's a private eruv in the neighborhood.

In the recording, Rabbi Rutt adds that the Rebbe said: "From the Alter Rebbe's Shulchan Aruch, it seems that a *reshus horabim* is defined as being sixteen amos wide [even without 600,000 people walking through it]. Because there is an opinion that says sixteen amos is enough for it to be a *reshus harabim*, we need to be stringent [and not rely on a string-and-pole eruv]."

From this story, it's clear that the Rebbe's view was to be strict like the Rambam's opinion and not rely on the eruv.

## Conclusion

From all the above, it is clear that the Rebbe was generally against the establishment of eruvin in large towns. Aside from the significant halachic questions involved in the eruv itself (and certainly in a

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18) Hiskashrus issue 531, also on recording.

town where 600,000 people pass through it, where it is impossible to establish an eruv according to the Alter Rebbe and the Tzemach Tzedek), there are many concerns about the pitfalls that could arise from it.

If someone will come and argue that this response from the Rebbe can be explained this way, another response that way, and a third response another way, we will tell them that instead of finding various excuses (due to the fact that they find it necessary to encourage carrying in cities), it is simpler to say that the Rebbe's opinion is against establishing eruvin in towns. We must be honest and submissive to the Rebbe's opinion, not bend the Rebbe's opinion to our will.

May it be Hashem's will that we follow the Rebbe's instructions and walk in his ways until the coming of Moshiach, speedily in our days!

## Summary

The Rebbe's opinion on establishing eruvin varies in different circumstances:

1. In places with 600,000 people, it is a public domain according to Torah law, and it is impossible to make a string and pole eruv (Tzuras HaPesach) .

2. Even if there are no 600,000 people and it is permissible according to Halacha, it is advisable to avoid building an eruv in towns due to the potential pitfalls.

3. In places where it is permissible according to Halacha and others will establish it anyway, efforts should be made to ensure it is done in the best possible Halachic manner. However, it is advisable to avoid using the eruv in towns relying on many leniencies (such as streets 16 amos wide without 600,000, Tzuras HaPesach more than ten amos, etc.).

4. In summer camps and small settlements (bungalow colonies) and the like, it is good to establish an eruv to enhance Shabbos observance, ensuring it is done in the best Halachic manner.



***Summaries  
of Topics in  
Eruvin***



*We are pleased to present you with a collection of essays written by talmidim of the Mesivta on topics related to mesechta Eruvin which was learned in our yeshiva last year.*

*For the benefit of the English reader, we present English summaries of the essays. The goal of the summaries is to provide the general ideas clarified in the Lashon Kodesh section in broad strokes. They are by no means exhaustive or precisely accurate.*



## Enclosures which Don't Always Work for Eruvin

### HaTomim Gavi Levitin

The common eiruv today is made with poles and a string on top, known in halachic terms as a “tzuras hapesach” (form of a doorway). However, there’s a weakness with this type of enclosure, as it can become invalid when many people walk through it. In the language of the Gemara, “a crowd can come and nullify the barrier” — either on a Torah level or rabbinically.

Therefore, the only way to truly fix the situation is to put doors at all the openings. The poskim debate whether these doors need to actually be locked every night, or if it’s enough that they can be locked.

There’s another type of enclosure that’s effective on a Torah level, known as a “shem daled”, which involves setting up walls at least one amah wide at every corner along two sides. The poskim argue whether a crowd passing through nullifies this kind of wall or not, and the Alter Rebbe holds that it does not.

However, when there’s a breach larger than sixteen amos (24.6 feet), the “shem daled” doesn’t help, and the wall becomes invalid.





## A Tzuras Hapesach Bigger than 10 Amos

### HaTomim Dovid Aizenman

The eiruvim we have nowadays, which are made up entirely of tzuras hapesach on all four sides, and the width of the openings is more than ten amos – they are technically allowed according to the basic law. However, it's still good to be stringent and not rely on them unless the width of each opening is less than ten amos, or the closed areas are more than the open ones (meaning most sides have solid walls, and one is using a tzuras hapesach to gap the remaining space).

When the purpose of the tzuras hapesach is just to permit carrying, you shouldn't rely on them alone. There should be at least a one-amah (18 ½ inches)-wide wall at every corner, on all four sides.

Extra care must be taken to regularly check and fix the tzuras hapesach so the eiruv doesn't get invalidated by the string shifting. This can happen if the string is more than three tefachim away from the sideposts, or if it sags downward, or if it moves even slightly off the sideposts. If this happens in even one place, the entire eiruv is invalid.



## The Width of a Reshus HaRabim

### HaTomim Heshy Eidelkopf

Those who rely on the condition that there must be 600,000 people to qualify as a reshus harabim (reshus harabim) don't need to be rebuked, as they have whom to rely on. However, anyone who fears Heaven should be stringent for themselves and treat any street that's sixteen amos wide as a reshus harabim, which can't be fixed by a tzuras hapesach unless there are doors.

When calculating the sixteen amos, the opinions differ: Some say that you can include parking spaces and sidewalks in the measurement, while others say parking spaces don't count and even create a separation between the street and the sidewalk. But

when there are no parked cars, the sidewalk can be included in the measurement as long as it's not three tefachim higher than the street. There's also an opinion that the moving cars reduce the status of the street as a reshus harabim.



## How to Calculate the 600,000 People Necessary for a Reshus HaRabim

HaTomim Hirshy Newman

There are three opinions among the Rishonim on the definition of a street with 600,000 people:

1. The street is accessible to 600,000 people, even if not all of them use it.
2. 600,000 people live in that city.
3. 600,000 people pass through the streets.

Even according to the third opinion, it doesn't mean that 600,000 people walk on every single street, as this is practically impossible. Additionally, in the encampments of the Israelites in the desert, the camp was considered a reshus harabim, even though 600,000 people did not walk on every street. Rather, it means that 600,000 people walk in the "reshus harabim," i.e., in the city's streets as a whole.

The Alter Rebbe modified the wording of the Shulchan Aruch, placing the law of 600,000 "passing through it" after the law of open alleyways. From this, it is understood that even those walking through the alleyways are included in the number of 600,000 people passing through the city's streets.



# Can a Crooked Street be a Reshus HaRabim

HaTomim Yosef Aizenman

There is a law that a reshus harabim must be straight and aligned, however, this only applies to a city that is surrounded by a wall. Nowadays, since our cities are not walled, this condition doesn't apply, and streets can be considered a reshus harabim even if they aren't straight.

Even in places where the reshus harabim needs to be aligned, it doesn't mean perfectly straight. Rather, it shouldn't be crooked like the shape of a daled.



# Do Surrounding Houses Create a Valid Eruv?

HaTomim Yosef Aizenman

There is a popular heter of the Chazon Ish which allows the construction of an eruv in large cities based on the partitions formed by the walls of houses. This is not aligned with the view of our Rebbeim for three main reasons:

1) In the Chazon Ish's writings, he rules that "public traffic does not invalidate a partition." However, the Alter Rebbe rules that "public traffic does invalidate a partition" when there aren't "four partitions" enclosing the area.

2) The Chazon Ish holds that three walls in a reshus horabim create a halachic reshus hayochid min haTorah. Moreover, as long as those three walls have more standing sections than breaches, they are still considered a reshus hayochid. In contrast, our Rebbeim maintain that three walls alone, in a place where public traffic passes through,

remain a reshus horabim.

3) The Chazon Ish holds that a breach wider than sixteen amos does not nullify a partition min haTorah. However, our Rebbeim rule that a breach wider than 10 amos invalidates a partition, making it into a karmelis min haTorah, and a breach of 16 amos transforms it into a reshus harabim d'oraisa.



## The Challenges of Lakes and Parks

### HaTomim Menachem Grimberg

Any area that includes a space of a beis sasayim (around 3854 sq. feet) that wasn't enclosed for residential purposes makes it forbidden to carry there. One solution is to put up walls to separate the non-residential area from the residential one, so it doesn't cause issues.

Non-residential areas include fields, water bodies, cemeteries, and zoos.

A city park that's meant to be used both day and night is considered a residential area. If it's only for daytime use, it doesn't count as residential and makes it forbidden. There's a debate about grassy areas, and the custom is to be lenient.



## Renting Rights from the Mayor and Utility Companies

### HaTomim Mendel Wilhelm

It's permissible to rent the rights of non-Jews from the mayor, as long as the mayor has the authority to leave his belongings in any

house in the city, even if only during wartime. Even if new non-Jews move into the city after renting from the mayor, there's no need to rent again.

In a residential building shared by Jews and non-Jews, you cannot rent the rights from the building's janitor. Although he's hired by all the residents, he has no access to the individual apartments themselves.

Similarly, utility companies like the electric company, which have meters inside the house, can't rent out their rights unless they have full access to the entire house.



## Including Non-Frum Residents in an Eruv

### HaTomim Michel Coplon

One can relinquish ones control over ones property even on Shabbos, even if one didn't make an eiruv deliberately.

If you carried something on purpose after relinquishing your control, you make it forbidden for the rest of the courtyard residents, to carry in the courtyard unless they had already taken advantage of carrying in the courtyard, before you carried.

Even someone who doesn't believe in the eiruv can relinquish ones control.

Most people who aren't religious today are considered like a child captured by non-Jews, so they can relinquish their control.

Renting rights works even with a Jew, since it's no less than relinquishing ones controls.

However, the mayor can't rent the rights on their behalf.



## Enclosing an Unusually Large Space as a Reshus HaYachid

HaTomim Mendy Rivkin

The Gemara states that the descending walls surrounding the ocean do not count as a mechitza (partition) to permit carrying across the whole world. The Rishonim disagree on the reason for this, with some explaining that extremely large partitions, which cannot be seen by someone standing in the midst of the walls, do not qualify as a valid enclosure.

Regarding what is considered “visible” for it to count as an enclosure, Rabbi Eisenstadt argued that it is sufficient if the walls can be seen above tall buildings. However, the Rebbe rejected this reasoning, pointing out that one could similarly see the ocean’s walls from a high vantage point (flying, etc.), and even in earlier times, there existed ways to reach great heights.