

Rabbi Yaakov Kermaier: The eruv not only provides, you know, a means for somebody to... some strained (?) (00:15) individual to carry his key or just to carry books, it really is a vital facilitator of social communal connections...

Rabbi Israel Rivkin: If I wanna carry my talis to shul, or if I'm visiting... if there's a Bar Mitzvah in a shul and you've gotta bring, you know, some of the food or you wanna, you know, whatever, whether there's an older, you know person who's wheelchair bound that you wanna wheel to shul, you know, there the eruv (?) obviously solves it... it solves the problem...

Rabbi Dovid Fuld: Um, with little kids and carriages, the eruv was a very important reality. Today, if you see someone carrying a... [INAUDIBLE PHRASE] [INAUDIBLE PHRASE] shabbos, is hardly noticeable...

NEXT: This is not a recent invention; there's a tract [INAUDIBLE] in the Talmud that deals with eruv...

Rabbi Haskel Lookstein: Eruv is such a necessity for a normal life on shabbos...

NEXT: And this is vital piece of religious infrastructure for the Manhattan Jewish Community – no questions about it...

NEXT: It's not just supposed to make shabbos *less* – it's supposed to make shabbos more!

Rabbi Haskel Lookstein: It makes life livable... on... on shabbos!

PAUSE...

Richard Joel: I don't know when I first knew about eruv but it certainly wasn't in my early years 'cause you knew from growing up, that on shabbos you wouldn't carry...

Blu Greenberg: When I was growing up, I made sure that my comb and my lipstick were all... were safely ensconced in shul so I didn't have a problem with carrying anything on Shabat...

Rabbi Yaakov Kermaier: I have two little kids and also I wanted to be able to carry my sermon notes [LAUGHTER]... and other things to the synagogue on Shabat and I found myself in an untenable situation...

Rabbi Dovid Fuld: My father [INAUDIBLE] (02:02) lived in Hill Crest, the next (?)... [INAUDIBLE] with my brother and he needed to carry silver nitrate pills so the answer was [INAUDIBLE]... um, he certainly was not gonna carry them

otherwise, so what he developed was he bought a hat a size too large, wrapped it in a tissue, put it in his hatband so he would have it with him...

Rabbi Saul Berman: The only way it could be permissible to carry would be if there were walls and where all openings were then enclosed by as it were doorways plus doors that were capable of being closed...

Richard Joel: And the only way you would think about it was in terms of your backyard and... and what we could do to make sure that your backyard was within an eruv so you could read or eat or do things there on shabbos...

Blu Greenberg: I spent... I... I do recall that since much of the time I didn't have help on Shabat, is um... mostly staying home on Shabat... [PAUSE]... getting to bed, reading my kids' stories, you know, whenever... wherever the eruv was pushed forward I think what was pushing it was sensitivity to women and young children...

NEXT: Uh, this essentially emancipated the women...

Rabbi Yaakov Kermaier: A real interesting group of women that met during the week found themselves entirely isolated on a social level from other young families so they decided, you know, what we are going to do is we'll get together on a Monday night or a Tuesday night or a Wednesday night so at least we have some sort of communal, social interaction which would normally be in the context of a synagogue on a Shabat morning but which they didn't have access to because there was no eruv...

Blu Greenberg: I think... I... I miss the eruv... [PAUSE]... but I do remember, actually – I shouldn't say that – because I always went on the [SOMETHING IN HEBREW] when I could push the stroller...

Rabbi Israel Rivkin: Look, now in Europe they had it in the little shtetl so you could carry your child from the main [INAUDIBLE] you know, to your own (?) shabbos but uh, you know, in the United States this was a sort of a foreign concept...

Els Benhiem: In Amsterdam, there was an eruv and... and it never happened that the eruv was... was broken, not kosher, an announcement made – none of the above...

Rabbi Israel Rivkin: The rumbling started – "Why don't we have an eruv, you know? We're all prisoners..."

Rabbi Norman Lamm: It was the... what we would today would call a [SOMETHING IN HEBREW]... they were the ones who pushed it; they pushed it because they come from Europe and Europe [SOMETHING IN HEBREW]...

[SOMETHING IN HEBREW]... was to hold it, he has to build a mikvah (sp?); he has to be build a... a school – he was very rich – and he has to... and an eruv...

PAUSE...

Stephen Savitsky: You know, the first shabbos that it was up, Steve Roland (?)... [INAUDIBLE] and I (?) –with our wives, we walked all over the... we walked literally, like [SOMETHING IN HEBREW OR BIBLICAL]... we walked the whole community from park to park, from street to street and we were beaming! It was unbelievable...

SIMULTANEOUS TALKING...

NEXT: [INAUDIBLE]...

NEXT: It was amazing! People were out for the first time! People were looking at us like they were freed!

NEXT: You needed permission from the City for every step of this!

Robert Sugarman: We had a proclamation which is in most cases, the first step in... in creating an eruv...

Rabbi Saul Berman: But it was working for... um, for Mayor Koch in his re-election campaign, we said we need the Mayor to support authorization for the construction project; he said, well, you know, let's... why don't you invite him to speak at Lincoln Square during the campaign... and I will suggest to him that, uh, it would be nice if he could announce at that occasion, that he has just signed the document authorizing the installation of an eruv...

Steve Orlow: What was involved here wasn't just the City of New York; you had the telephone company; you had Con Edison; you had State Highways Departments, City Highway Department, you had City Department of Parks...

Rabbi Yaakov Kermaier: And we discussed with various contractors whether or not it was it feasible to actually put up the wires where we needed to have them put up...

Rabbi Dovid Fuld: We went to major contractors – electrical contractors – to ask them to put up these lights; obviously, we didn't have guys who were gonna shimmy up all these poles – we needed the applepickers; we needed this kind of heavy equipment...

Rabbi Israel Rivkin: Again, these were strange concepts...

Steve Orlow: Imagine sitting down at a table and trying to explain to these individuals the concept of an eruv...

Rabbi Israel Rivkin: You know, explain to somebody that you wanna put the wire because you can't carry and it's our Sabbath and you can't do this...

Rabbi Yaakov Kermaier: For us, maintaining the eruv is... is something that we... we take as a very, very serious and sacred responsibility; we have one eruv checker who every Thursday, um, with his driver, goes out and inspects the entire periphery, all... the entire boundary of our eruv...

Rabbi Haskel Lookstein: There's so much construction going on in Manhattan that the... we couldn't maintain the Manhattan eruv, uh... as fast as you would repair it, it would get broken down...

Rabbi Yaakov Kermaier: We have an eruv that is probably much higher... what... has much higher maintenance requirement than any suburban eruv just because of the nature of this bustling city with cranes going through for construction projects and also, you know, you have many other types of interventions, you know, in terms of the actual organization that supervised it, it's in the [SOMETHING IN HEBREW]... -- it's a Hassidic [SOMETHING IN HEBREW]... that's based in the Muncie (sp?) area which has a... an expertise in a variety of areas; it has also a group of individuals who spend a considerable amount of time training, not only in the [SOMETHING IN HEBREW]... areas of erubin but also in the practical matters of designing urban erubin...

Richard Joel: There are different types of observant Jews who accept the eruv, uh, who don't accept the eruv; and there are some who continue to not carry within an eruv 'cause it's not their understanding...

Rabbi Yaakov Kermaier: Just because there is an eruv doesn't mean that any individual has to use it – it just means that it's available for those who do want to use...

NEXT: There are some members of my family who don't hold by this eruv or that eruv... um... and... and one that doesn't hold by an eruv at all...

Els Benhiem: And I remember I had cousins living in Paris and my cousins told me -- which at the time didn't go into my head -- they said, "The old people in Paris carry; but the new people who came to Paris, they don't carry..."

Richard Joel: Um, that, to the degree that we take the Sabbath from being unique and a kind of noble sanctuary and make it more like every other day – I can carry all during the week and I can carry on the Sabbath. So you're losing something of the uniqueness...

Rabbi Yaakov Kermaier: The need for an eruv on Shabbat is probably not as widely recognized within the non-orthodox community...

Steve Orlow: The major objection came – it was interesting – not from gentiles but from again, non-religious Jews who were at some times terrified... petrified or upset that the ambience of the community would change, that they would feel uncomfortable, for example, if on the Sabbath, they would drive, or they would walk around in... in clothing that might be inappropriate...

Els Benhiem: If you... if you build an eruv, you need an atomic bomb in your backyard...

PAUSE...

Rabbi Haskel Lookstein: We're talking about the 1950s... women were wheeling baby carriages – they were not staying home! And they were violating shabbos!

NEXT: I carried these anyway; [INAUDIBLE]...

Rabbi Haskel Lookstein: But everybody was doing it... I think that was common far beyond Manhattan; I was one of the younger group of rabbis, together with Rabbi Lan...

NEXT: Mmmm hmmm...

Rabbi Haskel Lookstein: ...uh, sort of helped the older group get the Manhattan Eruv going... Rav Kasha (sp?) was the initiator of the whole idea... and we spoke to Ravhenkin (sp?) particularly, and the two of them agreed that we should go ahead and do this, Ravhenkin in particular was very anxious for the eruv to be completed because he said it would save thousands of people from [SOMETHING IN HEBREW]... shabbos...

NEXT: And [INAUDIBLE] Henkin (?) [INAUDIBLE]... he was in favor of the eruv and I said, "Wait..." He understood what... what the problem was, you know?

Els Benhiem: And I remember we were happy that [INAUDIBLE PHRASE]...grateful...

NEXT: [INAUDIBLE PHRASE] [INAUDIBLE PHRASE] and they were (?)... carry...

Rabbi Yaakov Kermaier: Personally, I wasn't comfortable with the Manhattan as an island eruv...

Rabbi Saul Berman: Manhattan, is in fact, [SOMETHING IN HEBREW]... [SOMETHING IN HEBREW]..... it is [the] kind of domain in which eruv is not sufficient; that led me really to the personal adoption of the position of Rabbi Moishe Feinstein as to the unacceptability of an eruv in Manhattan...

Rabbi Yaakov Kermaier: There is a gut (?) opposition amongst certain sectors of the community because of the opposition on... on certain [SOMETHING IN HEBREW]... grounds um, to a Manhattan eruv by the late Rebbe Moishe Feinstein of blessed memory...i

Rabbi Haskel Lookstein: The argument – to the best of my knowledge – was if you make an eruv in Manhattan and there is no eruv in Brooklyn, because in those days there wasn't any, uh, then people are gonna cross the bridges into Brooklyn and they're gonna give a [SOMETHING IN HEBREW]... shabbos; what it meant was if there isn't an eruv *everywhere*, there can't be an eruv *anywhere*...

Rabbi Yaakov Kermaier: Over the years, there were certain physical realities that changed in Manhattan, um, that made the premises of that broader Manhattan eruv um, more difficult to understand and... and certainly to maintain...

Rabbi Haskel Lookstein: We always had financial problems with the Manhattan Eruv – it always had to be fixed and... and there were repairs that had to be made...

Rabbi Yaakov Kermaier: So where a boundary may have existed, it was no longer there...

Rabbi Saul Berman: No one actually seemed to know what the actual boundaries were; it seemed to me unlikely that anyone was actually checking them... uh, and so in consultation with Rabbi J.J. Shafter (sp?), uh, and Rabbi Bucholtz (sp?), uh... uh... we were in touch with Rabbi Zinner; we invited Rabbi Zinner to join us in a boat trip around the Island of Manhattan; by the time we completed that trip, it seemed clear that whatever installations hadn't been done, or whatever construction existed, um, in the late 1950s, that that no longer existed in its entirety...

Rabbi Yaakov Kermaier: Even if the eruv could be constructed to enclose a much wider area, it would be almost impossible to maintain as it once was to include the entire Island of Manhattan...

Rabbi Saul Berman: We were certainly not going to publicly announce that the... that it was not permissible to rely on the positions of Rabbi Riskin and Rabbi Henkin and Rabbi Lam and Rabbi Kasha, but I felt that it was my responsibility eventually to move towards some better resolution of this particular matter...

Rabbi Haskel Lookstein: Rabbi Saul Berman started to make an eruv on the West Side...

Rabbi Saul Berman: The Upper Westside was, by the late 1980s, a very diverse community; there was growth of... of much more... [PAUSE]... Hassidic or Yeshivish (?) communities, congregations within the Upper Westside; those communities id don't rely upon the Kasha eruv; the only way that it could... [PAUSE]... um, create something that would be satisfactory to me would be to function within the [SOMETHING IN HEBREW] and therefore it would require [SOMETHING IN HEBREW]. The vast majority of the space of the Upper Westside was actually enclosed by walls or buildings; all of those walls were intersected by openings of transverses through the park or streets running north-south. To deal with those, uh, again, the traditional response of [SOMETHING IN HEBREW] has been just as in a walled city, which may have multiple gates that even if the gates are open, um, so long as the gates are capable of being closed, um, that it is considered to be enclosed, it occurred to me that it should be possible to create some form of door that would be possible... through which it would be possible to close everyone of those intersections. I was working with engineers to try to figure out a way to create [INAUDIBLE PHRASE] that could possibly be acceptable in the City of New York; it took an enormous amount of time to get the development of canisters which could... without great fanfare, be attached to lampposts which would contain the doors that could in fact be stretched across the intersection and then rolled back up into the canisters (?)... The Parks Department was very opposed to every step of this because it involved canisters and wires being installed in lampposts at the edges and sometimes within the parks. But the Mayor's Office came down on them very hard and insisted that they cooperate with us the process of installation began in late 1992 and it took them until 1994...

[PAUSE]...

Rabbi Haskel Lookstein: The Westside then had an eruv; the word sort of went out that the Manhattan eruv was not valid so people began to question the whole thing – I couldn't argue the [SOMETHING IN HEBREW] – if you really didn't think was a good eruv, then don't carry! But don't make another eruv... which implies that the first eruv is no good. People have gotten used to using the eruv; the financial support for the Manhattan eruv became even more problematic – it was very difficult to maintain it.

Rabbi Yaakov Kermaier: In 2003, we decided that we were going to start expanding the eruv – the small eruv – which was viewed as a Mohadrin (sp?)... an eruv acceptable even by the more punctiliously observant parts of the community on the Westside, a small eruv, to try and expand it and continued to expand it to Jewish communities which found that eruv to be important to their Jewish life.

Rabbi Haskel Lookstein: To his credit, Rabbi Kermeyer (sp?) put his mind to it and his effort to it and he created a local eruv that covered a fairly wide area...

Rabbi Yaakov Kermaier: The communities have decided – we got the model we want to use is that this is a communal responsibility. I'm not even sure that given what a high maintenance eruv it is and how expensive it is to operate that it would be a feasible project if we didn't have this type of, you know, of respect and... and a real sense of communal responsibility...

PAUSE...

Richard Joel: It was never [INAUDIBLE PHRASE]... "Now we can carry..." it was, "Now we're a neighborhood; we're a neighborhood that can function as a neighborhood..."

Rabbi Haskel Lookstein: We don't live without an eruv anymore. I don't even remember how difficult it was to live without it...

Richard Joel: The concept of an eruv is such a beautiful one because what it says is that we can use law to provoke a sense of extended family and a sense of community...

Rabbi Haskel Lookstein: We seem to have an eruv wherever we go...

Stephen Savitsky: And today's there's no excitement; today you go to a place, no matter what you go – I was just in Kansas City – "Is there an eruv?" "Of course, there's an eruv in Kansas City!"

Rabbi Haskel Lookstein: I go my family in Cleveland and there's an eruv!

Stephen Savitsky: I was in Iowa last week – "Of course, there's an eruv!"

Rabbi Haskel Lookstein: I go to my family in Atlanta and there's an eruv!

PAUSE...

MUSIC... (guy singing while playing the guitar):

Why are there so many [INAUDIBLE] in the eruv?

On shabbos we carry outside...

The eruv made headlines and more (?) families moved in...



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But now there is nothing to [INAUDIBLE]...

So many [SOMETHING IN HEBREW]... and Jews can't believe it...

Renters are hoping to stay...

Someday they'll buy in the eruv connection forest...

'till [INAUDIBLE PHRASE]...

FILE OVER...