



# Wall grows in SqHill

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mitted to carry on the Sabbath and other not? They live in a city with an "eruv," literally a 'mixture', explains Pittsburgher Jeff Joseph. Soon observant Pittsburgh families may, however, have their own eruv.

Halaha—Jewish law—decrees that on Shabbat, Jews may carry within a private home; they cannot, however, carry from one property to another. "An eruv 'mixes' people's real estate properties," says Joseph. It pools the private rights of a geographic area to create a "Sabbath domain."

Put more simply, an eruv connects properties, creating one giant 'home' in which observant Jews may carry.

An eruv is created by physically encircling an area, "making the images of walls," says Joseph, one of a number of concerned Jews working to get the eruv constructed. The most common method of building an eruv is to use preexisting telephone or electric wires and to connect them, giving the 'wall' or courtyard image.

"Imagine the poles are the doorposts; the wires the lintels," explains Joseph. Natural boundaries are also utilized, like steep hills and rivers.

"Something that is impassable would create a boundary in the image of a courtyard," Joseph elaborates.

The idea of creating man-made boundaries and connecting properties may seem extreme or even trivial, but to the observant, an eruv represents a solution to a major problem.

"The purpose of an eruv is to enhance the beauty of Shabbat," says Joseph emphatically. "Two comments I hear from Pittsburghers is that they would like to be able to enjoy the Sabbath with their family—take walks together, attend synagogue together.

"The eruv would also allow greater freedom for those who study on the Sabbath—people could carry siddorim and books to afternoon study class."

Creating an eruv creates problems. It must first be approved by the Rabbinical Board of Greater Pittsburgh—an organization of rabbis in the area—as the Board ultimately oversees the eruv. Joseph and others worked closely with the Council, which is headed by Rabbi Baruch Poupko. Council approval for the eruv came a little over a year ago.

The idea of an eruv is to draw the Jewish community closer together; adds Joseph. If some observant Jews

disagree with the eruv, it cannot be built. Joseph explains that while some Pittsburgh Jews don't recognize the eruv, they will not block its construction.

An eruv expert—someone well-versed in the Halaha relating to the erection of eruvim—must also inspect the area to determine if an eruv is feasible.

"Rabbi Shimon Eider—an acknowledged Halahic expert—okayed the boundaries of the eruv six weeks ago," explains Joseph. The proposed eruv will encompass most of Squirrel Hill; from Forbes and Wilkins Avenues to the Homestead Bridge; from the edges of Frick Park to Windsor Street.

Approval must also come from the city and the utilities, for their light and telephone poles and wires are to be used. The technicalities of an eruv are enormous—simplified, the wire must "run over the top of the utility pole," says Joseph. To modify the existing poles, wood or pipe is run from the ground to just underneath the wire. The light and telephone companies have to approve modifications on their poles before eruv construction can even begin.

Not all Jews favor an eruv. Some, in fact, strongly oppose it, likening encircling Squirrel Hill to creating a ghetto.

Joseph rebuts this, contending that observant Jews tend to settle within a certain geographic areas because of its accessibility to Jewish communal life. Erecting an eruv will merely make their lives more enjoyable and easier, he says.

"We have to carry out an education process as well," says Joseph. "People have to know the boundaries of the eruv, so they do not unknowingly transgress the Sabbath. And the eruv must be inspected before every Sabbath, to be certain that it is whole."

Based on construction costs, insurance on the poles and maintenance workers and upkeep, Joseph believes that the eruv will cost anywhere from \$10 - \$12,000. Families will be asked to contribute to the construction.

The issue of eruvim has vexed Jews since the time of King Solomon, explains Joseph. "There is, in fact, an entire tractate in the Talmud dealing with eruvim.

"But," he concludes, "with several major obstacles overcome, Pittsburghers may have an eruv by next spring."