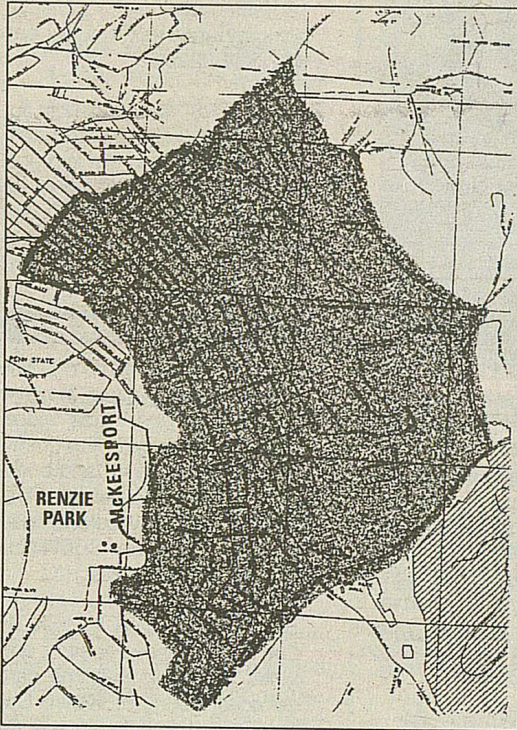


Greater Pittsburgh:

White Oak Jewish community to install eruv



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This seems to be a season for walls, and a cycle for walls. In light of the departing of Rabbi and Rebbitzin Jaeger, who, among the many good things they contributed to our community, checking the eruv or boundary around the Jewish community was just one.

It is an important question that will be addressed in the near future; namely, who will confirm the eruv is unbroken and that we may carry food and children from place to place on

Shabbat and holidays.

Also, in the light of the Fast of Tammuz and Tisha B'Av when the walls of the City of Jerusalem and later the walls of the Temple were breached respectively, walls show their importance. These ancient events are

fresh in our minds, as we mark them with fasting and lamentation.

There have been some prominent voices protesting in recent days for our focus on mourning, to the point that lacrimation outweighs the holidays in the Jewish calendar. This created a siege mentality in Israel, according to Rabbi Ismar Schorsch, Chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, hence slowing the peace process. Peter Novick, a history professor at the University of Chicago, argues that the Holocaust has become central to Jewish identity. Author Ian Buruma, a fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, basically accuses Jews of setting a bad example for other minorities, creating an atmosphere where they also focus on the suffering or painful aspects of their past.

The short answer to these kinds of objections is, when the authors of such opinions live through such misery, let's see how concerned they are with the balance of their cultural calendar, or

what kind of example they make for the rest of the world.

The long answer? It may have begun in White Oak. Rabbi Irvin Chinn announced that an eruv is in the process of being built around the Jewish community of White Oak. The eruv in McKeesport is called the Schulhof Community Eruv, dedicated to the memory of Moishe and Sarah Schulhof by their children Nathan, Cindy, and David.

One of the prime movers in this operation is Rabbi Silver.

Rabbi Silver elaborates, "First you get a sense of the location of the community and the area you need to include. There are ways of connecting pre-existing boundaries with pre-existing landmarks such as telephone poles, electric poles, and natural embankments. Often, the side of a river or stream has a sloping bank. Halachically, the ratio of vertical to horizontal on the slope needs to be 5 to 12.

"If the proportion of verticality is higher, that is okay. If it is lower, or if there is a break in the natural landform, it is not valid as a part of an eruv. In order to confirm the slope, we attach spirit levels (The bubble floating in oil, not Casper the friendly Ghost!) to a right angle form measuring 35 inches high by 7 feet across. This measure enables us to confirm if the hill or bank of the stream is steep enough to be considered part of the eruv."

The other pre-existing landmark we can take advantage of, said Rabbi Silver, "is the use of the light poles. By attaching additional wire molding to the light poles we can make what is called a Tsuras ha Pesach or doorway. You see, according to Jewish law you may have a doorway in every wall, but there is no limit to the size of the doorway through it. Hence the

poles serve as uprights and the wire overtop the poles serves as the top of the door frame, or lintel, (or in Hebrew, Kurah.) Once the wiremold (or lechi) is attached to the overhead wires, connecting them with the size of the poles, the unit becomes the Jewish legal equivalent of a wall with a great doorway.

"By expert configuration," he said "we will be able to surround the White Oak Community with an eruv or the Jewish legal equivalent of a wall, enabling religious Jews to carry within the community on a Sabbath."

The good rabbi referred to Rabbi Nachum Langsner and Rabbi Zvi Perecman. Members of Mesivta Beth Hamidrash, they are doing a lot of the hands-on adjustments.

Rabbi Langsner said, "We have to carry around a rather cumbersome instrument called a right angle form. To be up to standards, the slopes we measure must have a vertical ratio at least as great as the angle with which we measured. If there is a break in the slope, where it does not meet these requirements, we cannot use it as a boundary."

"Today," said Rabbi Perecman, "we are building an eruv for about 10 observant families, but with the idea that more will come in the future, attracted by the idea. It's a rewarding feeling, putting this work into the community. What is beginning as a wispy collection of wires and slopes, will become a very special foundation, a spiritual foundation. Only by remembering the walls that had fallen in the past, and the losses we associated with them, can we envision the need for new walls to protect the seeds of future Jewish communities that grow within them."

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