

# The Sea Point Eruv

The prohibition against carrying on Shabbat includes house keys, prayer books, canes or walkers, and most importantly children who cannot walk on their own. Recognising the difficulties this rule imposes, Talmud sages devised a way to allow for carrying in public without breaking the rule. With an eruv, communities are able to turn a large area into one that is considered - by Jewish law - a large private domain, in which items may be carried.



SeaPointEruv

The term eruv refers to the act of mixing or combining, and the shorthand for eruv hazerot - the mixing of domains - in this case, the private (rashut hayahid) and the public (rashut harabim). An eruv does not allow for carrying items otherwise prohibited by Jewish law on Shabbat, such as money or cell phones. Some Jews do not carry inside an eruv should they forget what it's like without an eruv.

## Sea Point, Fresnaye, Bantry Bay and parts of Upper Green Point

Having an eruv does not mean that the suburbs of Fresnaye and Bantry Bay and some of upper Green Point are enclosed entirely by a wall. Our eruv like most others, is comprised of a series of pre-existing structures (walls - including the beachfront, fences, electrical poles and wires) and a



number of structures created expressly for the eruv, often a wire mounted on poles.

The Sea Point Eruv includes five shuls; the Green and Sea Point Congregation - Marais Road Shul lead by Rabbi Wineberg, the Sephardi Congregation lead by Rabbi Suiza, the Arthurs Road Shul lead by Rabbi Altman, the Yeshiva of Cape Town lead by Rabbi Ben David, the Chabad of Cape Town lead by Rabbi Popack

and Ohr Somayach lead by Rabbi Abrahamson. The eruv boundary is 14.2 km long and includes 804 acres of land, 3,25 square km's

Whilst the eruv, is unlikely to be noticed by anyone other than those looking for it, a characteristic which fulfills a Talmudic guideline (that the eruv be an integral part of the city, as unobtrusive and unnoticeable as possible), there are some features that had to be built for halachic reasons that

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may not be associated with the eruv, but will certainly be noticed. These have been a stumbling block - B"H only temporary - for the ever patient and active Stan Grusd, Chairman and McGuyver of the Eruv.

The first major milestone happened more a decade ago, Av Beth Din Rabbi Kurtstag presided over a meeting where the local rabbis of the time agreed that Sea Point should have an eruv, and appointed David Cohen to 'run with it'. Establishing the Eruv in Sea Point was no easy task - over the years skepticism was abound - various objections from the City Council created bottlenecks and finally the Chief Rabbi tasked Rabbi Klein, the Beth Din- Rav HaMachship for UOS SA Eruvin - to step in.

Rabbi Klein appeared in Cape Town many times, walking the boundaries with Tarna Klitzner (the architect), Jeff Borstruck (the builder), Stan Grusd (the foreman), and David Cohen (past chairman). They attended many meetings with the council and Rabbi Klein tells the story about how after a meeting that looked like an all time low, Rabbi Klein met a project manager on the plane for FIFA 2010. Since he had the time for a careful explanation, the council representative understood that the Eruv should be installed in time for the games as this was an important tourist and inclusivity requirement. Fortunately council objections had been muted after the team



acknowledged the festival lights installed between poles during almost two months of every year.

About a year ago, however, after the necessary assurances, the Council changed its position and a real, final countdown could begin. The eruv that has been erected broadly covers the upper parts of Green Point, Fresnaye, Bantry Bay and Sea Point, including Beach Road. Continuing from pole to pole or connecting to walls and fences of existing buildings or even thick bush, the eruv follows a tortuous route up Glengariff Road and upwards and onwards, winding its way through Upper Green Point (incl Springbok Road), Sea Point, Fresnaye and Bantry Bay. Occasionally it takes its form from parts of the mountain (as long as they exceed the required 25 degree angle - NOTE: part of Ocean View Drive above Sea Point is excluded), bearing in mind that the minimum height of any pole or fence must be one metre. The final stretch runs along the promenade from Saunders Rocks back to the pole on the corner of Three Anchor Bay. To view the route of the eruv, see website: <http://eruv.org.za/ct>

There are sixteen original construction sites, some poles are free standing and others are a smaller pole strapped to an electricity pole. Many of the roads that end at the mountainside have various wooden constructions. The most significant fence was constructed with assistance from Kim and Lance Katz. Stan and Jeff completed all sites to build the eruv in some two-and-a-half weeks (awesome!). Since it's been established and declared kosher by Rabbi Klein the eruv has been

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checked every week prior to Shabbat. Talmudic scholars Simon and Gayle Apfel were trained for this onerous task, by Rabbi Klein together with other members of the committee. Checking the Eruv has not been without incident. The onerous tasks an eruv checker usually takes on is not always well understood upfront, for example it includes a hedge clipper. Plants that obscure an eruv boundary can be problematic so they must be clipped. Although the Council and Community approve of the Eruv, and the Council Bylaws require that house owners must keep their own vegetation trimmed and at any time the Council can issue a notice that the owner must trim their vegetation, we've learned that anyone that needs their hedge trimmed should be consulted in advance.

Soon after the Eruv was established the Seeff Atlantic Seaboard blog wrote about: "Cape Town Movin' for Eruvin - Religious sanction provides sanctuary for property values in Sea Point". Leave it to Cape Town to bring the sea and the mountain into their religious practices! Since an eruv is not easily granted nor maintained, they attract people from a wide reach, in the city and beyond. Outside



of Israel, there are over 150 areas eruvim (plural). Most of them lie within the boundaries of major cities and metropolitan areas, such as Johannesburg and now the first and only communal Eruv is established in Cape Town. Often when an Eruv is built there is an immediate boost in property value. Aside from the religious and cultural value that it brings to a neighborhood, having a house-proud neighbor with a well-manicured garden doesn't hurt either. Sea Point putting up an eruv may convince Jewish Capetonians (especially those with children) to put up the "For Sale" sign as the draw of living a religiously observant yet practical life is great. Sea Point home owners with eruvim properties may also see an increase in property values as Seeff agents in all offices agree that many of their clients choose property based on religious and communal reasons and residencies that cater to a buyers faith.<sup>1</sup>

Like another child, the Eruv comes with its' own mazel. Stan tells the story of the time when there was a problem in a corner of the Eruv. He was discussing one friday morning with Rabbi Klein on the phone, how the problem could be overted. The best solution would require a pole more than 10 tefachim long and one tefach wide. If this was strapped to the already emerging structure under the leaning pole, One a great deal more

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<sup>1</sup>Rabbi Klein with Gayle and Stan standing at the spot where a huge boulder had previously rolled down the hill from behind Rabbi Klein and Rabbi Ordman and over the places they were standing. It hit the pole (replaced with the one in the photo) and smashed it over and finally came to a halt in the neighbours wall. .

The eruv is a symbolic demarcation of the private sphere, one that our communities came together to create. Despite its symbolic nature, the eruv is intended to mimic in some way the form of walls, which need doorways--defined as two posts with a crossbeam over them, strong enough to withstand an ordinary wind. The eruv likewise needs openings, consisting of crossbeams



resting or passing directly over the top of the doorpost (lehi). This is how modern rabbis arrived at the solution of having the eruv be made of a wire: The poles holding up the wire represent the "doorposts," and the wire itself represents the "crossbeam."

We thank all the population of Cape Town for allowing us to have our Eruv. We do not take this for granted and recognise not only is this due to all the efforts that were made in order to obtain initial permission but also the fact that we retain this privilege, as a small Jewish community living amongst over three million people that are not Jewish. We live together in peace and this is not to taken for granted, for this we thank Hashem together with all the rainbow of nations and cultures.