

5th November, 1998
16th Marcheshvan, 5759

Mr David Schreiber
JERUSALEM ISRAEL

BY FAX

Dear David,

I am finally turning to your e-mail of 30/9. I realise now that looking at the date you were sufficiently motivated to prepare it on Motzei Yom Kippur. I therefore trust that you will forgive the extended response time, but I am only now catching up with my pre and during and post Yom Tov backlog. Anyway, enough with the excuses. Let's get down to business.

As I understand your question, you are particularly interested in how the Adass (Charedi) community came to accept the Eruv. I think that there are a number of reasons that fortuitously happened in the right order or at the right time or they just happened to exist, period.

1. There had been an Eruv earlier in Melbourne but it had been constructed with many kulot. That was sufficient reason for the Charedim to not use it, ignore it or object to it, depending on their temperament. The essential point was that the Charedi leadership had taken a stand of ignoring it, which meant that they were not locked in to a position of absolute opposition, apart from the Lubavitchers.
2. By accepting Rav Eider as the posek and undertaking to abide by his rulings, we immediately got the Lakewood Kollel on side and that already muted opposition from other Charedim.
3. Technicians supplied by the power company carried out our construction and hence all their construction was done to industry standards. Rav Eider was amazed at the quality of the work which (a) made the Eruv so easy to check, both initially and on a weekly basis, and (b) its quality means that psullim are rare and are only due to traumatic events such as vehicles hitting poles or poles being replaced. I do not recall one p'sul in 15 months that was due to some deficiency in construction. I will refer to this again below.
4. A week or so after the Eruv was commissioned, a meshullach was in town who happened to be the Chief Inspector of the Eda Charedit Eruv in Yerushalayim. The local Charedim asked our permission for him to inspect the Eruv. He found one major thing that was overlooked and came up with a minor chumra. He checked back with Rav Blau who is responsible for the Eda Charedit Eruv in Y. and Rav Blau endorsed the Eruv subject to the matters referred to being fixed. We fixed the first thing ourselves. It was a p'sul that changed the Eruv from being kosher lechatchila to kosher be'de'evid. The local Charedim paid for the other point, which was a chumra not required by Rav Eider (which means it had to be pretty machmir). At this point the Adass Rabbi came out and ruled that the Eruv was kosher and may be used but he drew attention to the Mishna Berura, which notes that a "Baal Nefesh" does not use an Eruv. (Incidentally, we therefore have a hechsher not only from Rav Eider but also from Rav Blau!)

-2-

The long and the short of all this is that apart from the "ferbrente" Lubavichers for whom it is a "political" issue, and a few others, who for various reasons do not use an Eruv, everybody uses it. In the Adass community, I am told that about 90% of the men use it and a higher percentage of the women do also.

5. Our weekly inspections are carried out on Thursday afternoon. If repairs are necessary, they are done on Friday morning and the repairs are inspected before the Eruv is pronounced "kosher" for that Shabbat. Our inspectors are drawn from the Lakewood Kollel and the Adass community and that also helps the situation. Particularly when the Adass inspector loudly tells everybody that the Eruv is so well constructed, that he is certain that there has NEVER been a chashash that the Eruv could have been posul the previous Shabbat. (In case this is not clear, if a p'sul is found on Thursday, it could have occurred any time since the previous Thursday inspection, which includes the Friday or the Shabbat itself. However because of quite definite evidence e.g. witness seeing when an incident happened or the freshness of fragments in the gutter, he is quite convinced that every incident so far, occurred after the previous Shabbat.) Again the quality of the construction was critical in the Eruv gaining its reputation for reliability. I must add that the Charedim now proudly show off the Eruv to any of their colleagues who come to town and there are many. Perhaps one or more of your Charedi antagonists could be encouraged to find out about, or better still, visit Melbourne.
6. Having said all of the above, I come to the really vital part. I think that the real reason the Eruv has been accepted by the Charedim is that they themselves wanted it. The women wanted it and their pressure added considerably to the pressure coming from some of the men already. While at the beginning, many Charedim were "intimidated" by the Baal Nefesh definition, I think that this has been forgotten or ignored. Influential lay leadership from the Charedi side encouraged by positive feedback by our leaders was also essential.
7. Another point that comes to mind is that we have excellent co-operation with the public authorities who have been unbelievably supportive and, for that matter, generous with that support. The Eruv has created a lot of interest and has been written up in the general press. Engineers find concepts such as "walled cities" and "laws instituted by King Solomon" pretty exotic and interesting compared to their usual duties.

You also ask about people finding out about the Eruv for a particular Shabbat. We have a recorded phone message which we have in place by 12 noon on Friday. So if any repairs are required they have to be finished and inspected by that time. If there are no problems, we put the message on as early as possible during the day. At our shule we also have a flag pole in the front and once the Eruv is pronounced kosher on Friday a plain green flag is flown from the masthead until motzei Shabbat. We have not yet had a Shabbat where the Eruv was not kosher. If that was to happen we would run an appropriate message, fly the red flag, ring all shules in the Eruv and try and put a message over the Jewish radio programme that goes to air on Friday afternoon. The mind boggles at the thought.

Incidentally the number of calls to the Eruv line is pitifully small. My theory is that people are happy to assume that the Eruv is kosher. They do not want to know about any other possibility!

-3-

I will send a packet of material to the London address that you supplied.

Should you require any further information or any clarification of the above, please contact me again. I am very happy to assist.

Yours sincerely,



P. M. Kloot

P. S. Thanks for supplying the fax no. Please note that my new e-mail address is kloot @ one. net. au.

Please regard this document as a personal communication. It expresses my personal views as frankly as I could manage, and consequently does not necessarily represent the views of Melbourne Eruv Pty Ltd or the members of its Board of Directors. 