

# COMMUNITY TIES: BOUND TOGETHER WITHIN THE ERUV

**Rabbi Rick Jacobs, Union for Reform Judaism**

I received a call a number of years back on erev Rosh Hashanah from Rabbi Jake Rubenstein, of blessed memory, who was then the rabbi of Young Israel of Scarsdale. He excitedly told me, “I convinced my colleagues to change the path of the eruv to include Westchester Reform Temple. I wanted to make it easy for people in my Orthodox synagogue to celebrate with our friends at WRT.”

It wasn't that my congregants especially cared about the borders of the eruv. It was that Rabbi Rubenstein drew a map of his Jewish community and he deliberately made sure we were part of his circle of responsibility and relationship. I thought, “What have we done recently that expresses even a fraction of that remarkable love and inclusivity?”

**The eruv — the boundary that is literally put around the Jewish community — sometimes just a little fishing wire, somehow ties us together.** On Shabbat an eruv allows me to carry my tallis, my keys, push my stroller. It also allows me to participate with a placard at a protest in my community, a protest against the endless killing of Black and Brown people by law enforcement. You may wonder, is this an appropriate Shabbos activity? Is it permitted? I would ask — is it not required?

Now let's just think for a moment about an eruv. **An eruv is a ritual construct that joins my home to my surrounding community, my private home to the public space.**

The streets, the homes, and the people within the eruv are linked to me. They become an extension of my personal, private life. It's a remarkable Jewish practice. **For those of us who have had our worlds confined to home and Zoom for the last couple of months, take a moment to reconnect to the public spaces in our community and to the many people we're not sheltering with.**

*“What have we done recently that expresses even a fraction of that remarkable love and inclusivity?”*

**Who's in my eruv?** Jews who think like me, vote like me, pray like me, and believe just like me? Yes, there are plenty of people like that. But **it has got to go broader. Particularly, we need to focus on Black and Brown Jews who are in our eruv. Do we see them? Do we know them?** Are they in our leadership? Do we know why many are not active in our communities? These questions are always important, but especially now.



***“We cannot distance ourselves from those hard realities in our community. Let’s count our blessings, but let’s also be accountable and honest about what we are not facing.”***

**Inside our eruv, let’s be proud of our Jewish institutions, institutions of learning, spirituality, and activism. But within each and every one of them is also narrow-mindedness, intolerance, bigotry, and, I’m pained to say it — racism.** We cannot distance ourselves from those hard realities in our community. Let’s count our blessings, but let’s also be accountable and honest about what we are not facing.

Let’s also use our time this shabbat to think about those within our eruvim whom we do not see, but they are there and yes, a part of us. Black and Brown people who are not safe walking to their houses of worship even though they are within our eruvim. Some of those Black and Brown people are members of our Jewish community and many do not yet feel included, valued, and understood.

**Fundamental to being a person of Jewish commitment is to be an *ohav ha’briot*, a lover of human beings; it also means to be antiracist.**

Black and Brown lives have been devalued for centuries. Yes, there’s an eruv in New York, Minneapolis, Louisville, Atlanta, and it includes a whole lot of Black and Brown people along with plenty of Black and Brown Jews, and many others. **And because we in the eruv join our personal space to the neighborhood community space, their well-being is our responsibility.**

