

For Immediate Release

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**Landmark Exhibition on the Eruv, "It's a Thin Line",
Comes to Life In New Book
Published by Yeshiva University Museum**

It's a Thin Line: Eruv from Talmudic to Modern Culture
(Yeshiva University Press, 187 pages, hardcover, 6 1/4" x 9 1/4")
\$35 (\$28 for Yeshiva University Museum members)
<http://yumuseum.org/books>

New York City, April 28 – Building on the success of "It's a Thin Line: The Eruv and Jewish Community in New York and Beyond", its landmark 2012 exhibition on the *eruv*, Yeshiva University Museum, together with The Michael Scharf Publication Trust of Yeshiva University, is releasing a beautifully designed book that combines original multi-disciplinary essays, opinions, and art in an unprecedented study of a fundamental and contentious concept in Jewish life.

It's a Thin Line: Eruv from Talmudic to Modern Culture (The Michael Scharf Publication Trust of Yeshiva University, \$35) brings together for the first time essays on the age-old rabbinic innovation of *eruv*, combining *halakhic*, historical, sociological and artistic perspectives. The book is available exclusively through Yeshiva University Museum's web site.

What is an eruv? An *eruv* is a border, usually made out of string or wire stretched on top of or on telephone or light poles, which symbolically encloses a neighborhood or a city. It allows Jews to accomplish one of the most basic activities on the Sabbath, which Jewish law otherwise prohibits on the Day of Rest: Carrying. An *eruv* makes it possible for people to carry keys, push a baby carriage or hold a baby, or bring food to someone's home.

In recent years, the 2000-year-old rabbinic idea of the *eruv* has caught the attention of scholars and artists, sociologists and politicians. Historians have begun to study the development of the *eruv* from the courtyards of Roman Palestine to the urban *eruv* of the modern period.

The *eruv* is not just a concept. It's also a physical creation that powerfully affects the lives of observant Jews. Without an *eruv*, parents couldn't even carry their children on the Sabbath. *It's a Thin Line* traces the history of the *eruv* and its adaptation into New York's urban environment, and raises provocative questions. Even people who don't know about *eruv*s live within their boundaries. And as high-profile cases have illustrated, *eruv*s can still rankle neighbors.

Edited by Rabbi Adam Mintz, one of the foremost historians of the *eruv* in America and the exhibition's academic adviser, *It's a Thin Line* is divided into five sections:

- **A Curatorial Tour**, with an overview and analysis of the exhibition by curator Zachary Paul Levine

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- **Eruv and Halakhah**, with insights into Jewish law from renowned Rabbi Herschel Schachter
- **Eruv in History**, including an examination of *eruv*s as “the gateway to Orthodoxy in Gotham” by historian Jeffrey Gurock
- **Eruv and Jewish Community**, including an essay on “The Eruv and the Changing Role of Women” by Blu Greenberg, dubbed “founder of Orthodox Jewish feminism” by The New York Times
- **Eruv and Modern American Culture**, a fascinating look at the *eruv*'s artistic character and its integration into the lives of cities.

“The exhibition was intended to raise as many questions as it answered, and it generated a tremendous dialogue that we wanted to continue through this book,” Mintz said. “It’s also an opportunity for us to continue connecting this ancient concept to modern life, engage with some of the preeminent scholars in modern Jewish thought, and examine all of the *eruv*'s implications and possibilities.”

Dr. Jacob Wisse, director of Yeshiva University Museum, writes in the book’s foreword. “The inspiration for creating *eruv*in – from the courtyards in Roman-era Palestine enclosed with string to the communities of suburban New Jersey and Long Island who *eruv*in are affixed to telephone poles using mammoth cherry pickers – has remained constant. They are created to maintain and strengthen family, and to generate community.” The dynamic and creative nature of these changes inspired the Museum to produce an exhibition and, now, a book on the subject.

As the exhibition did, the book *It's a Thin Line* vividly illustrates how an ancient Biblical precept has been creatively interpreted and applied – especially in and around New York City. As a means for offering separation while integrating into city life, the *eruv* provides a potent symbol of Jewish life in America.

How far should and do civic authorities go to accommodate religious practices? How does the creation of an *eruv* impact community, and affect the demographics and character of a neighborhood? And where do you draw the line between public and private? From a notorious segment on The Daily Show about the proposed Westhampton Beach *eruv* to city hall debates around the world, *eruv*s are still a hot-button issue.

ABOUT YESHIVA UNIVERSITY MUSEUM

Yeshiva University Museum is dedicated to the presentation and interpretation of the artistic and cultural achievements of Jewish life. The Museum, founded in 1973, is distinguished by its wide-ranging and intellectually rigorous exhibitions and, as the cultural arm of Yeshiva University, by its strong educational mission. As a partner in the thriving Center for Jewish History and a participant in New York’s lively downtown cultural scene, Yeshiva University Museum makes a distinctive and important contribution to Jewish life and to the world of culture and the arts. The Museum’s rich and diverse collections preserve Jewish artifacts, art, texts and material culture for posterity, making objects accessible through exhibitions, educational programs, and research and conservational initiatives.

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