

Q&A from the Bais HaVaad Halacha Hotline

Host Specificity

October 19, 2023

Q I live in a new community without a permanent shul. We have been davening on Shabbos in the home of one resident for a while. Some participants would prefer to convene in a more centrally located home, but our current host insists we stick with him. May we relocate against his will?



A The Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 153:17) says, “When someone hosts a shul in his home for many days, the congregation may not change locations to another house.” The reason is that the change may lead to scuttlebutt in the community that the host family was found to be unfit somehow (Mishnah Brurah *ibid.* 90). This halacha is based on a *takanah* regarding eiruvin: For an eiruv to be effective, an item of shared food must be deposited in one of the homes within its boundaries. The Mishnah (Gittin 59b) says that to maintain shalom, the home selected to house the eiruv food is not to be changed.

Even if the congregation has a legitimate reason to relocate, it should not do so, because of the hard feelings that could cause (*ibid.*). But if the reason is pressing enough, the change may be made (Mishnah Brurah *ibid.* 92). In your case, the relocation is for convenience, so the host may object. But if he acknowledges that his location causes severe inconvenience for a significant number of members, but he resists the move out of concern for the rumor mill, you may relocate without his consent.

This sensitivity toward the host is warranted only when the question is whether to move to an alternate temporary location. But when the community obtains a permanent facility, the host may not object, because the reason for the change is clear to all and no suspicion will ensue (Mishnah Brurah *ibid.* 93; Aruch Hashulchan *ibid.* 41).