

Rabbi Yosef Kushner

Case: In addition to the *yichud* scenarios discussed in previous sessions that have been especially pertinent during Covid-19, additional *yichud shailos* have arisen involving doctors, dentists, and the like. Normally, a female patient having an appointment with a male doctor and vice-versa does not pose any halachic problem, since other staff such as nurses and hygienists enter the room frequently. During recent times, though, the doctor and the patient are often alone, as other nonessential staff may not be present. Another common scenario that may create a problem is having a home health-aide who comes to assist when the elderly person in question insists that all relatives stay away.

Question: How can one avoid the *issur yichud* in these situations?

Answer: Until recently, people never even considered such *shailos*, as the elderly usually have relatives who constantly come to visit. Likewise, doctors and dentists often had an office or waiting room full of observant Jews. Now, though, the elderly are often telling their relatives in no uncertain terms that they are not allowed to visit, and potential problems of *yichud* may be the last thing on their mind. Nevertheless, this is indeed a real concern, and we must try to determine the proper course of action.

In the case of the doctor or dentist, the best halachic advice is to bring a child along if the health regulations and restrictions allow for it and it does not pose any additional risk of infection. Even if a Jewish patient is going to see a non-Jewish doctor, bringing a child who is older than three or four would still solve the problem, as the child is a *shomer* (protective guardian) to the adults, who are no longer considered alone. Another solution may be to leave the door open, if others may enter at some point.

But not every scenario has an easy solution. In the second scenario, where an elderly person is *makpid* (particular) that absolutely no one come to visit him, then there is no clear

easy solution, since even if the door is left ajar, no one else is nearby.

Question: Might a home surveillance system or series of video cameras help?

Answer: There are indeed some *poskim* who permit *yichud* situations with a video camera, at least in pressing situations (which this may be). But this is a complex question, as many cameras may only cover certain angles and parts of the house. Thus, even if all of the doors and valuable possessions are covered by the surveillance system, there are still plenty of places inside the house without any camera that could be subject to an *issur yichud*. So a person would have to be careful not to be in those parts of the house without cameras, or the video cameras would have to be installed strategically in a manner designed to avoid *yichud*, such that all areas of the house are included.

Since there are no clear-cut solutions that apply in all situations, it is advisable to discuss specific questions of this nature with one's local rav.