

Is There a Problem of Yichud in a Room Where the Door is Closed but Not Locked?

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Question: In some office buildings, a male and female employee might be sitting alone in an office, where the door to the public hallway is closed but not locked. Is this a problem of Yichud?

Answer: Typically, if a man and woman are alone in an office, there is a problem of *yichud*; however, there is a leniency known as "*pesach pasuach l'reshus harabim*," which means that when the door to the room is open to a public area there is no problem of *yichud*.

A question arises when the door is closed but unlocked. Is this considered open, which would negate the problem of *yichud*, or is it considered closed? The Rashba seems to say in *teshuva* that there is no problem of *yichud* as long as the door is not locked. Rabeinu Yona and the Teshuvos Radvaz also rule this way. Rav Akiva Eiger and the Bais Meir disagree and say that the door must actually be open. They go so far as to say that there is a typo in the Rashba and he would not actually permit *yichud* when the door is closed but unlocked.

There is a *machlokes* between the contemporary Poskim regarding the practical halacha. The Chazon Ish rules leniently and says that as long as the door is not locked there is no problem of *yichud*, because technically people may walk in. Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky differentiates between cases where the prohibition is *d'ohraysa* - such as when one Jewish man is secluded with one Jewish woman - and when the prohibition is *d'rabanan* - such as when one Jewish man is alone with two Jewish women or with one non-Jewish woman. He says that when it is only a question of *d'rabanan* one can be lenient, but when it is a question of *d'ohraysa* one should be stringent. All agree that if there is no real possibility of anyone walking in, e.g. it is during off-hours, then it would be forbidden in all cases.