

Is There a Yichud Problem for a Man and Woman to be Alone on an Elevator?

**Question:** Is there a *yichud* problem for a man and woman to be alone on an elevator?

**Answer:** In the olden days, elevators had operators who were often males, and many *shailos* were asked if it was permitted for women to get on the elevator alone with the operator.

To answer this question, we first have to ascertain the minimum amount of time two people need to be alone together for them to transgress the prohibition of *yichud*. Some Poskim say that the timeframe is two minutes. Others say that it is five minutes. Rav Moshe Feinstein says that it would depend on the specific situation. If the two people in question knew each other beforehand, it would take less time to decide to do an *aveirah*, so the timeframe would be shorter. If they are strangers, it would take longer, so the timeframe would be longer.

It must be noted that even if the two people are together for less than the minimum amount of time, if they are in a place where they technically *could* stay together for the full amount, it would also be forbidden because of "*chatzi shiur*", which means that the Torah forbids you to do half an amount of a prohibition.

Most elevators can potentially stop at every floor, which means that people in them are never secluded for any minimal amount of time. In large office buildings, however, there sometimes are express elevators that don't stop for 50 floors. In today's times, however, even this would probably not be a problem because the elevators move so fast that even traveling 50 floors would be less than the minimum timeframe for *yichud*.