



### The Definition of “Perutzim” Introduction

The Gemara (*Kiddushin* 81a) relates that Rav and Rav Yehuda were walking together on the road when a woman came toward them. Rav told Rav Yehuda, “Pick up your feet from Gehinnom” [i.e., hurry up and walk quickly so that we should avoid ending up in Gehinnom because of the prohibition of *yichud* (Rashi). As was previously explained, the prohibition of *yichud* also applies in an open place where people are not commonly found. If one finds himself in such a situation, he must quickly hurry away.]

Rav Yehuda told Rav, “You said that it is permitted for upstanding people” [i.e., the Mishnah says that one woman may be secluded alone with two men.

Regarding this, Rav said that this is only true regarding upstanding men. Regarding “*perutzim*,” immoral men, however, even ten men may not be alone with one woman.]

Rav responded, “Who is to say that we are considered upstanding men? ‘Upstanding men’ refers to people like Rav Chanina bar Papi and his friends (i.e., Rav Tzadok and Rav Kahana, who were in a challenging situation and overcame the test —Rashi).”

- There is a *machlokes* among the *Rishonim* and *poskim* (see *Tur* and *Bais Yosef*, *Shulchan Aruch* and *Rema* EH 22:5) if Rav meant that the *halachah* is in fact that regular men are considered *perutzim*, with the only exception being men whom we clearly know are upstanding, such as Rav Chanina bar Papi and his friends, or if Rav only meant this as *middas chassidus*, i.e., beyond the letter of the law; according to the letter of law, though, a typical man has a *chezkas kashrus*, presumption of virtue, and is considered to be upstanding unless we specifically know that he is not.