

Q&A from the Bais HaVaad Halacha Hotline

Clean Room

December 12, 2024

Q I made a *bracha* and then discovered that a soiled diaper was present. Should I repeat the *bracha*?



A If one recites *Krias Shma* or *tfilah* (*Shmoneh Esrei*) within four *amos* (approx. 6.5-7.5 ft.) of *tzoah* (solid human waste), he is not *yotzei* (S.A. O.C. 76:8), whether or not there is an odor. The Shulchan Aruch (185:5) cites the uncertainty of Tosfos about whether *brachos* are treated with the stringency of *Shma* and *tfilah* in this regard. The Mishnah Brurah (ibid. 7) rules that they are.

If the distance is greater than four *amos*, even if the person making the *bracha* can see it, the *bracha* need not be repeated (Mishnah Brurah 81:13). Likewise if it was in a different room, even within four *amos* (O.C. 79:3). A soiled diaper currently worn by a child is treated more leniently, because it is *tzoah mechusah* (covered waste), and the *bracha* doesn't need to be repeated (Ishei Yisrael 52 fn. 72-star).

In all cases, if there was a foul odor where the *bracha* was recited, there is a *machlokess* (see Biur Halacha 79:1 s.v. *Arba*). In practice, Ishei Yisrael (52:28) says to repeat the *bracha*.

These halachos apply where the presence of *tzoah* could reasonably be expected (e.g., an active young household during "business hours"). Otherwise, the *bracha* is valid even though the *tzoah* was in close proximity (O.C. 76:8).

These guidelines apply *bedi'eved* (ex post facto, where the question is whether a *bracha* must be repeated); the laws of making a *bracha* ab initio where *tzoah* is known to be present are more stringent.