

Past the Graveyard
May 26, 2022

Q While driving to work, I sometimes take a route that passes two Jewish cemeteries. Do I make the *bracha* twice?

A Chazal instituted that one recites a *bracha* upon seeing Jewish graves (Shulchan Aruch O.C. 224:11). This applies not only when entering a cemetery, but even when just passing by (Aruch Hashulchan 244:8).



Similar to other *birchos hare'iyah*, this *bracha* is only made if you haven't seen a grave in thirty days. So if you often pass those cemeteries, you don't recite the *bracha*. If it is only once in a while that you take that route, you do.

When one sees a different cemetery within thirty days, the majority of *poskim* seem to agree that a new *bracha* is required. Since *birchos hare'iyah* are for sights, each sight demands another *bracha* (Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 60:12, Aruch Hashulchan *ibid.*). But the Mishnah Brurah (*ibid.* 17) cites others that suggest that a different cemetery is not considered a new sight, because most graves look similar. Because *safek brachos lehakeil* (a *bracha* is not recited when in doubt), don't make a *bracha* on the second cemetery.

Note that the Igros Moshe (O.C. 5:37) writes that one does not make the *bracha* upon seeing a tombstone, only the ground where the body is buried. If you only catch a fleeting glimpse of the cemetery while driving, and you don't see the ground, a *bracha* is not recited.