



Ask The Rabbi...

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This edition contains:

1. Pringles – Stop Before You Pop for a *Bracha*
2. *Mayim Achronim* Water
3. A Riddle, *Baruch Hashem!*

Annette from Shoeburyness, UK asked:

Dear Rabbi,

What *bracha* should I recite before eating Pringles Potato Chips?

Dear Annette,

I've got a better question. How in the world do they get them all to stack up like that inside that can? :-)

To answer your question, I phoned Pringles to find out how they are made: First the potatoes are cooked, mashed and dehydrated into potato flour. Then "just enough" water is added to form a dough which is flattened, cut, molded into a saddle-shape, quick fried and canned (which answers my question about how they get them into that can).

The *bracha* on potato flour is *Shehakol*. Since Pringles are made from potato flour, perhaps they are considered potato flour "masquerading" as potato chips and therefore *Shehakol*. On the other hand, since they look like potatoes, perhaps they are considered "resuscitated potatoes" and therefore *Borei P'ri HaAdama*.

I asked Jerusalem's Rabbi Meir Bransdorfer, *shlita*, and he ruled that the *bracha* for Pringles is *Shehakol*.

Ron Shama wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

What is the source for 'Mayim Achronim'? Some people say that it's *halacha*, but I've been to people where they don't do it. And are women supposed to? Thanks

Dear Ron,

The Shulchan Aruch states that "*Mayim Achronim Chova*," i.e., washing one's hands before *Bircat Hamazon* is an **obligation**. Rabbi Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg, *shlita*, told me that women are *included* in this obligation to the same degree as men.

There are two reasons which are offered:

- "Just as a soiled *Kohen* is invalid to perform the Temple Service in the *Beit Hamikdash*, so too soiled hands make a person unfit to say a blessing;
- To clean off any "*Melach Sdomit*" — "salt of Sodom" — which might be on the hands. *Melach Sdomit* was a strong salt harmful to the eyes.

Some people have the custom to **not** wash *Mayim Achronim*. Since *Melach Sdomit* is virtually non-existent today, and the concept of "cleanliness," is a relative matter and most people don't consider their hands "dirty" after a meal, therefore washing them would not be necessary.

I once heard a beautiful explanation of the symbolism of *Mayim Achronim*: *Mayim Achronim* washes off the "Salt of Sodom." The people of Sodom were infamous for their stingy cold-heartedness, especially regarding hospitality towards strangers. For example, the people of Sodom surrounded Lot's house and ordered him to send out the wayfarers he was hosting. After a meal, having eaten our fill, we might not empathize with a poor stranger knocking on our door asking for a little food. This quality of cold-heartedness is the antithesis of Judaism, and therefore we "wash it off" — saying, "We want no part of it!"

Sources:

- Chulin 105a,b & Tosafot, Berachot 53b and Tosafot.
- Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 181:1, 10; M. B. 22.

A Riddle:

Yossi Klein from Har Nof, Israel posed this riddle:

Which 3 people mentioned in the Torah said "*Baruch Hashem?*"

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