

“It is an eternal covenant of salt before Hashem.” (18:19)

Rashi explains that Hashem entered into a covenant with Aharon *HaKohen*. He called it by the name of something which is “healthy” – meaning it does not spoil – and which makes others “healthy” – meaning it preserves other things from spoiling. Salt’s unique properties; its own “health,” and ability to preserve the “health” of others make it the symbol of the covenant.

It is a well-known and accepted fact that the study of *Torah* has a lasting effect on a person. The question that, regrettably, has been the source of contention is: does the study of *Torah* influence others in its proximity? Does a *yeshivah* or *kollel* in a community raise the spiritual and moral consciousness of that community? Or, is the effect exclusively centered upon the *lomed*, learner, himself? *Horav Chizkiyahu Mishkovsky, Shlita*, relates the following incident that occurred between *Horav Arye Leib Shteinman, Shlita*, and a wealthy philanthropist that sheds light on the above question.

The philanthropist asked *Horav Shteinman* the following *shailah*, *halachic* query: “For many years, I have been supporting a number of *yeshivos* in America, *yeshivos* in which the students are engrossed in all-day *Torah* study in the tradition of old. Recently, I have been approached by the leadership of a number of reputable *kiruv*, outreach, *yeshivos* to lend my financial support to their institutions. Shall I diminish my annual contributions to the “mainstream” *yeshivos*, so that I can support the *kiruv yeshivos* or not? After all, if I decide to diminish my yearly contribution to the regular *yeshivos*, it will not have an effect on their learning. Their spiritual development will continue unabated. If anything, their physical state of affairs might change, but their learning will not change. If I contribute to the *kiruv yeshivos*, however, I might reach those who would otherwise not be reached. I will be saving young Jewish men from spiritual extinction. What should I do?”

Horav Shteinman responded with the following powerful statement: “Do you think that the unparalleled surge of young people returning to the fold is a gift from Heaven? No! It is because there are young men studying unpretentiously in *yeshivos* throughout the world. The merit of their *Torah* study has brought about a resurgence of desire for spiritual development among our people. If you decrease your contribution to the *yeshivos*, you will cause a reduction in the number of *baalei teshuvah*, those who are returning to *Torah* Judaism.”

We may add that *Horav Shteinman* was not addressing someone who was distant from *Torah*, but one who was a *ben Torah* himself. It is regrettable that we do not appreciate the value and far-reaching effect of our learning. Perhaps, if we did, our diligence in *Torah* study would increase, and so would our pride in this endeavor.