

Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak; and may the earth hear the words of my mouth. (32:1)

Chazal (*Pirkei Avos* 4:B) teach that one should be meticulous in his Torah study because *shigigas Talmud oleh zaton*, a careless misinterpretation is considered tantamount to willful transgression. However, one who is sincere in his study but errs, is making a sincere mistake. In his commentary to *Berachos* 29b, the *Yismach Moshe* offers a homiletic rendering of *Chazal* which goes to the core of the consequences that result from failed leadership. A *talmid chacham*, Torah scholar, must be meticulous in his behavior, his every action must be the product of forethought and introspection. Indeed, he must guard himself much more than the *am ha'aretz*, common man, who is not well-versed in Torah. When the *am ha'aretz* sees the *talmid chacham* acting inappropriately (even if it is only in the common person's mind and based upon his personal subjective barometer of right and wrong), in his mind, he has license to act sinfully. The *shegagah*, thoughtless act, of the scholar will often have an adverse effect on the unlearned man. This applies equally if the scholar's *mussar*, rebuke, is not accepted because the people have little respect for him. The *am ha'aretz* will not view this as an isolated occurrence, or, perhaps, an ineffective scholar, but will assert that scholarship in and of itself is of little value.

If, however, *talmidei chachamim* live up to the standard which is expected of them: if they are *l'shem Shomayim*, for the sake and glory of Heaven – not simply to lord over people or ingratiate themselves to them; when they are transparent and, thus, have the respect of the wider community – they will positively impact the *am ha'aretz*. Thus, explains *Horav Yissachar Shlomo Teichtal, zl*, *Ha'azinu ha'Shomayim*, those who are *Himmel menshen*, individuals who live spiritual lives, whose minds are in the heavens, they should listen carefully to everything that I say. Then, *v'sishma ha'aretz Imrei fi*, the *am ha'aretz* who is connected to the mundane world will also listen and follow in the correct path.

With this idea in mind, we may explain the difference between *haazanah* and *shmiyah*, which are synonyms for listening/hearing. *Haazanah* is a stronger form of listening, whereby the listener applies himself cognitively to understand fully what he hears. In contrast, *shmiyah* is applied to hearing, even if the listener does not quite understand. The *talmid chacham* is enjoined to think well above what he is about to do because his actions have consequences. The *am ha'aretz* just listens and follows what he is taught, even if he does not fully understand. He follows the example of those who are more erudite than he. Thus, the Torah uses *haazinu* concerning *Shomayim* and *sishma* in connection with *eretz*.