

נדפס ע"י ולזכות
הרה"ת ר' יוחנן וזוגתו מרת לאה
ומשפחתם שיחיו
גאלדמאן

כ"ה

TALKS AND TALES

**CAPTURING THE HEARTS OF THE YOUNG,
THEIR PARENTS, AND THEIR TEACHERS**

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When I arrived in this country in Adar Sheini 5700 and learned of the situation in American and Canadian cities, I understood that writing letters is not enough. It is necessary to provide Jewish educational literature. Notwithstanding the publishing costs, I began a monthly newspaper called "Hakria Vehakedusha" as well as talks for the young and youth in Yiddish and English, which is, with the help of Hashem, having a great effect.

(Igros Kodesh Rayatz vol. 7 page 22)

ON Tzom Gedalya 5702*, Rabbi Hodakov wrote in his diary: *Today the [Frierdiker] Rebbe said to me that he notified Ramash (the Rebbe) that it was time to publish a newsletter for children. I was instructed to speak with Ramash about this.*

It was barely three months after the Rebbe arrived in America from war-torn Europe and was appointed to lead Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch and Kehot Publication Society. Jewish education in America at the time was precarious at best and there was a critical need to provide Jewish American youth with genuine Jewish content. In time for Chanukah 5702*, a simple four paged mimeographed newsletter titled "Talks and Tales for Children" in English and "שמועסן מיט קינדער" "און יוגנד" in Yiddish saw the light of day, a historic first for a series that would continue unabated for the next 47 years transforming the market of Jewish children's literature.

Talks and Tales both in English and Yiddish was produced by Rabbi Dr. Nissan Mindel. Dr. Mindel arrived in America together with the Frierdiker Rebbe on 9 Adar II 5700*, and merited to serve as a secretary for the Frierdiker Rebbe and later for the Rebbe. In addition to his many responsibilities in handling the English correspondence for the Rabbeim and other scholarly works, one of his primary assignments was to author the various articles and columns each month

that for many years served as the only source of timely Jewish content for thousands of children around the world.

The Rebbe was directly involved in the development of every column in the Talks and Tales and even commissioned specific artwork for the publication. Throughout the years, until 5749*, all the English articles as well as many of the Yiddish articles were personally reviewed by the Rebbe prior to publication with utmost precision.

In many letters from the Rebbe's early years in the United States, the Rebbe mentions that he is currently preoccupied with the editing and publishing of the "Shmuessen," alongside many other tasks.

In countless letters, the Rebbe is seen busy with their dissemination and encourages others to get involved as well. "What were the results of your efforts to spread the Shmues'n at the High School?" the Rebbe asks one Chossid.¹

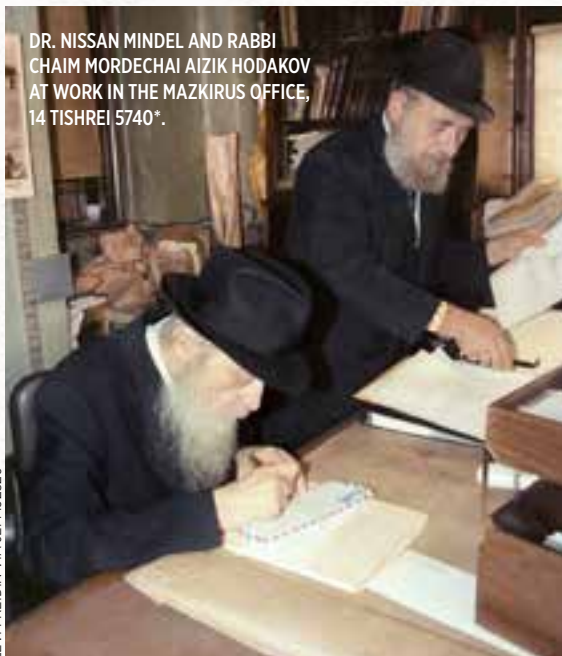
With time, Talks and Tales was published in Hebrew, Spanish, French and Italian (translations from the original English and Yiddish) and became the foundation for much of the children's literature published by Kehos in various languages.

Although much of the content was translated and used in all the languages of the Talks and Tales, each issue was independent of the other. Even as the Yiddish and English series were being published simultaneously, they did not have the same content in a given month.

The first issues of the Talks and Tales and the Shmuessen had identical content, but beginning with the second issue they were different. In a diary entry from 23 Teves 5702*, Rabbi Hodakov notes: "With regard to the Yiddish (newsletter), I reported



THE REBBE'S NOTES ON A DRAFT OF "IN NATURE'S WONDERLAND," INSTRUCTING THE WRITER TO ADD A FOOTNOTE THAT 15 SHEVAT IS ABOUT EDIBLE FRUITS, SPECIFICALLY OF ERETZ YISRAEL (AS OPPOSED TO ACORNS, THE SUBJECT OF THE COLUMN).



DR. NISSAN MINDEL AND RABBI CHAIM MORDECHAI AIZIK HODAKOV AT WORK IN THE MAZKIRUS OFFICE, 14 TISHREI 5740*.

LEVI FREIDIN VIA JEM 192320

to the [Friediker] Rebbe that we think it should have different content than the English.” In fact, some columns which debuted in the Yiddish Shmuessen early on did not appear in the English Talks and Tales until much later. For example the fascinating “In Nature’s Wonderland” column debuted in Yiddish in Elul 5706* and was incorporated into the English Talks and Tales only in Shevat 5724*.

Furthermore, the Rebbe discouraged the idea of reprinting old articles in later editions in the same language. Once, Dr. Mindel planned to reprint an article about Shiva Assar B’Tammuz and made a note at the bottom of the draft that was submitted to the Rebbe for editing that it was “Reprinted from the TALKS of Tammuz, 5714.” The Rebbe wrote on the draft:

ע[ד]ע[תה] לא הדפיסו ב"פ[עמים] (לבד דינים
וכיו[צא] ב[זה]) - ואין כדאי לשנות מנהג טוב זה. למלאות
בהמשך הסיפור שלבסוף שבטח מן המוכן הוא.

Until now an article was never printed twice (aside for pertinent halachos and the like), and it is not worthwhile to change this appropriate practice. Add more details to the story which are certainly available.

In those early days of Lubavitch in America, when the mission of bringing Yiddishkeit to the masses drifting away into assimilation was of prime focus, the Talks and Tales was a powerful tool to anchor so many children and their families to authentic Yiddishkeit. Day schools and Hebrew schools subscribed their

Rabbi Yossi Goldstein was a *talmid* in 770 in those early years and once while standing outside the Rebbe’s room he overheard the Rebbe say to Rabbi Sholom Mendel Simpson, “I need to stuff the envelopes myself and place the stamps. Perhaps I need to take them to the post office as well...” Rabbi Goldstein approached the Rebbe a little later and offered to do the work of preparing the Talks and Tales for mailing. At first he wanted to do the work in a different room so as not to disturb the Rebbe but the Rebbe insisted that all the mail prep should be done in his room.



KEHOT PUBLICATIONS AT THE WORLD'S FAIR OF 5722, INCLUDING TALKS AND TALES IN FIVE LANGUAGES.

LIBRARY OF AGUDAS CHASSIDEI CHABAD

students, *bochurim* set off on Merkos Shlichus with many copies and *rabbonim* and *shochtim* in various towns and cities throughout the country made an effort to disseminate them as widely as possible.

In addition to focusing on timely topics related to that month, such as pertinent *halachos* for an upcoming Yom Tov, historical context and a relevant story, every issue included columns that ranged from explaining sections of the *siddur* and the origin of Hebrew names, to a fascinating story and the acclaimed “In Nature’s Wonderland” column describing a natural phenomenon with a lesson in *avodas Hashem*. None of the content was random and every line was pure Yiddishe content suffused with *yiras Shamayim*.

The Rebbe once described at a *farbrengen* how one can never know the full extent of their impact when doing *hafatza*, and used the dissemination of Talks and Tales as an example: “When a child comes home and tells his parents that he saw a young man with a beard selling Talks and Tales who tried to shove a booklet into his hands but the child dodged his efforts, the parents are reminded of their parents, and in one moment they are inspired²...”

In those early years the Rebbe and the Frierdiker Rebbe personally solicited Chassidim and *askanim* to get involved in disseminating the Talks and Tales.

In a letter addressed to Agudas Chabad and the Ladies Auxiliary of Newark, New Jersey, the Rebbe thanked them for their financial support to Merkos

and encouraged them to continue their support mainly through finding ways to bring the Talks and Tales to every Jewish child in their city.

*"I am glad to see your warm interest in our vital work, and we hope you will continue to express your support not only financially but through disseminating the 'Shmuessen' which is published by Merkos L'inyonei Chinuch, in order to bring a great spiritual boost to your city."*³

In a letter to Dr. Mushkat the Rebbe writes, "We are glad to add you to the subscription list and you will receive the newsletters every month. Certainly you will send the payment for your subscription and also work on recruiting more subscribers. You certainly appreciate the great value of these newsletters and it would be proper to make the Shmuessen and Talks and Tales into household items in every Jewish home."⁴

Although the Talks and Tales in both languages were originally published as a resource for children not receiving a proper Jewish education, it became clear over time that the intended readership was every Yid, even *talmidei hayeshivos* and elderly Chassidim. The readership was encouraged to write to the editors and sometimes the Rebbe himself would respond to their inquiries.

Rabbi Moshe Pesach Goldman related that once, during the 5700s*, he was standing in the foyer of 770 when the Rebbe approached and asked the *bochurim* standing there how much time must one wait after eating *milchigs* before eating *fleishigs*. One of the *bochurim* responded that one needs to wait a half hour and a *rav* who was nearby said that in Lithuania it was customary to just rinse your mouth between *milchigs* and *fleishigs*. "I did not ask what was customary in



Lithuania, I asked what is the *halacha*," the Rebbe said. "You don't read the Shmuessen? In it we wrote that one needs to wait one hour between *milchigs* and *fleishigs*. Someone wrote us a letter asking what the source for it is and we responded that the source is from the Shaloh."

Someone once wrote to the Rebbe about a foundational question in *emunah*.

"What is the proof that Torah is from Sinai? If it is just tradition, then is this also the proof of all other religions, *lehavdil*?"

The Rebbe responded: "I am surprised that apparently you did not read what was printed on this topic in the *Shavuos* booklet from Merkos, in the Talks and Tales."

Often the questions touched upon deep discussions in *nigleh* and Chassidus and it was clear that, while errors were inevitable, the content was painstakingly prepared and the presentation was intentional.

One example of this can be found in a letter the Rebbe addressed to Reb Moshe Pinchas Katz answering several questions he had on the content of the Shmuessen.⁵

In the first edition there was a story about Elazar Hatzaddik who heroically defied King Antiochus and did not agree to eat kosher meat next to an idol to give off the impression that he was following his decree. He was cruelly tortured and then died. The Yiddish article used the word "געשטארבן" and Reb Moshe Pinchas wondered if perhaps it would have been more appropriate to use the term "נפטר" to describe the passing of such a *tzaddik*.

The Rebbe responded that the children would not understand the term *niftar*, besides for the fact that in *cheder* the word *מת* was always translated into Yiddish as געשטארבן. The Rebbe then added parenthetically "similar to the idea of *לא מת אבינו*" and proceeded to write a deep *pilpul* on this *maamar Chazal*.

NOT A NEWS MEDIUM

"The Talks and Tales is not a news medium, to be read and discarded; nor does it accept advertisements. Its material is of permanent Jewish interest, a veritable treasure store of Jewish interest." – Rabbi Nissan Mindel



RABBI LEVI GARELIK

MENDI JOURNO

FREEDMAN FAMILY

THE SIX LANGUAGES THE SHMUESSEN WERE PUBLISHED IN.

In the winter of 5714*, a reader sent a letter to the Rebbe asking why the Shmuessen and Talks and Tales did not report on the recent passing of a venerable Talmid Chacham. The Rebbe responded:⁶

אם קורא הוא בשימת לב הראוי את ירחונינו בטח כבר הי' יכול לראות שבאופן פרינציפי אין הוא דן אלא ע"ד תומ"צ ומאורעות דזמן העבר ולא ע"ד המאורעות דזמננו זה (וע"ז יש די מכ"ע יום יומיים). והטעמים מובנים לכל המתבונן בהמצב דזמן ההוה - (יוצא מן הכלל יחידי הי' המאמר ע"ד הסתלקות נשיא המל"ח ומיסד עתוננו - הרבי מליובאוויטש זצוקללה"ה)

If you read our monthly newsletter with the appropriate attention certainly you will see that in principle it contains only information about Torah and mitzvos and events of the past and nothing about current events. (For that there are many daily newspapers.) The reason for this is self understood to anyone who observes the current situation. (The only exception to this rule was an article about the histalkus of the nossi of Merkos L'inyonei Chinuch and the founder of our newsletter—the Lubavitcher Rebbe זצוקללה"ה.)

Many years later, in the summer of 5736*, Reb Moshe Pinchas Katz wrote a letter to the editors:

I am very surprised with the esteemed editors that all this time there has been no mention of:

1. All the mitvzoim the Rebbe has recently launched, which have been reported about in many newspapers throughout the world.
2. The same is true with the fact that this year the Rebbe declared as "Shnas Hachinuch!" The Rebbe emphasized that this should be widely publicized and there is no mention of it in the Shmuessen.
3. The twelve pismamim the Rebbe suggested for all children, which were published in a special booklet, were also publicized in many newspapers throughout the world and there is no mention of them in the Shmuessen.

How is it possible that the Shmuessen in Yiddish and in English which are published by Merkos under the Rebbe's leadership should not mention such important topics which are relevant to all Yidden throughout the world? We see how strongly the Rebbe kochs in them and you are silent with a deafening silence? Isn't this information more important than writing about a

creature found in the far ends of the earth? Certainly if this was published in the Shmuessen which has such a wide readership it would inspire many hundreds and perhaps thousands in a practical way.

Rabbi Hodakov responded simply that, “The Rabbeim instituted that the content of the Shmuessen should have a special character—without including new things—regardless of how important they may be.”

OTHER LANGUAGES

For many years, the Shmuessen in Yiddish were disseminated in Eretz Yisroel as well but in the summer of 5716*, two Chassidim, Reb Avraham Meizlish and Reb Naftali Kraus undertook the mission of publishing a similar monthly newsletter in Hebrew titled שיחוח לנוער. It had the same cover design and many similar columns which were often translations of old articles but some original content as well.

In a letter to Reb Naftali, the Rebbe clarifies that a translation must never be verbatim and should be done in a way that is most accessible and relevant to the respective culture. However, the cover design and other illustrations should be the same in order to emphasize how they are all part of the same umbrella publication.⁷

In a letter dated 5 Elul 5716*, the Rebbe acknowledges receipt of the first issue of Sichos Lenoar.

“ותנוח דעתו כאשר הניח דעתי כאשר הופיע לאור עולם
“May your mind be at ease as you have put my mind at ease with the publication of the Sichos Lenoar. Yehi ratzon that this will serve as a good beginning for the Torah of the Rabbeim to conquer Israeli literature, especially of the youth.”⁸

Many of the original articles that appeared in the Hebrew language Sichos Lenoar were edited by the Rebbe as well.

When Reb Gershon Mendel Garelik arrived on shlichus to Italy in 5719*, one of the earliest *peulos* was to publish Talks and Tales in Italian. A professional translator was hired to prepare the content and all the drafts were sent to the Rebbe before publication. The Rebbe returned the drafts with grammatical edits and the translator was astounded at the Rebbe’s command of Italian.

Talks and Tales was published in French, as well, through the Lishka.⁹ Reb Refoel Wilshansky was responsible for the project. Once, when an article from “In Nature’s Wonderland” was chosen for translation, the French translator vehemently disagreed with a certain line in the article and refused to translate it.

“Please explain the following statement that you wrote in the Shmuessen,” wrote Rabbi Wilshansky to Rabbi Mindel. “According to Einstein’s theory [of relativity] it is possible that the earth is stationary and the sun revolves around it.’ One of our translators caused an uproar about this and says this is completely inappropriate.”

The Rebbe responded to this question in his own holy handwriting.

“This is a necessary result of the theory of relativity. Einstein adds that:

- a. From a scientific perspective there is no meaning to the words “moving” or “stationary” unless you immediately explain that this position is relative to something else.
- b. It is impossible to prove which is true: a) whether the sun revolves around the earth, b) if the earth revolves around the sun, c) or if they both revolve around a point between them.”



A DESIGN WITH A MESSAGE

As a publication created and directed by the Rebbe, everything in the Talks and Tales was specific and purposeful. Even the illustrations were reviewed carefully; especially the front cover, which debuted in 5703* and remained unchanged for 46 years, was unique in its precision and messaging down to its finest details.

In 5719*, several years after the Hebrew version, Sichos Lenoar, rolled off the presses in Israel, an Israeli architect Mr. Meir Ben Uri wrote a letter to the Rebbe with several questions about the cover design. Following is a free translation of the Rebbe's response with editorial notes in parentheses for clarification.¹⁰

With much interest I read your letter from Erev Rosh Chodesh Nissan, which was a follow up to our conversation during your recent visit.

You focus on the design of the cover page of the Sichos Lenoar which is published by Merkos L'inyonei Chinuch, and you have three main points of critique:

- 1. The placement and design of the luchos. (Why are they placed above clouds? Why are they drawn on an angle?)*
- 2. The placement and design of the globe. (It is drawn in a way that Asia and Australia do not appear there at all.)*
- 3. The illustration of the saying of Chazal על שלושה דברים העולם עומד - תורה, עבודה וגמילות חסדים (the world stands on three pillars - Torah, avoda and gemilus chasadim) through an illustration of three physical pillars. [On what do the pillars stand?]*

As a preface, I would like to point out that you surely understand this cover design has been widely publicized for over 18 years in the United States, Israel and around the world so it is important not to make any changes to it unless there are extremely compelling reasons to do so.

The main purpose of publishing this monthly newsletter is in order to strengthen Yiddishkeit and to permeate the hearts and minds of the youth in every way possible. To accomplish this, the textual content is not enough and it is important that the first glance at the newsletter should have this effect as well. This is accomplished through illustrating that on the one hand, Yiddishkeit and its practical applications—namely

Torah study and mitzvah observance—are the loftiest and greatest in all of creation; and on the other hand, everything in creation is based on Torah and mitzvos.

The luchos are the clearest icon of Torah and mitzvos. Even children who have not received a Jewish education—a demographic certainly included in the intended readership of the newsletter—are familiar with the luchos.

The illustration emphasizes that the luchos (Torah and mitzvos) are above the earth and the heavens. The most practical way of illustrating the heavens is through clouds, therefore the luchos are placed above the clouds. Only Hashem, the creator of heaven and earth, is above the luchos. This is represented by the ב"ה which appears on the top right corner of the page.

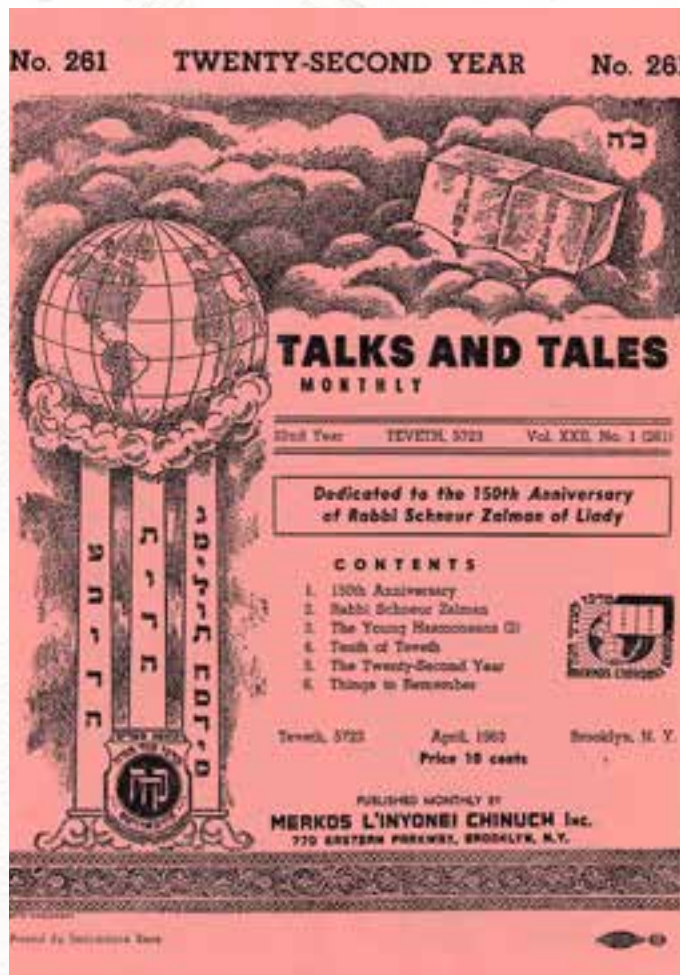
Under the heavens is the earth and since Matan Torah happened at Har Sinai, the globe was drawn in a way that one can draw a line from the ב"ה on the top right corner, through the luchos, ending at the approximate location of Har Sinai on the globe.

These three elements (the ב"ה, the luchos and the globe) were therefore drawn diagonally from each other, for if they would be drawn one on top of each other perpendicularly, the globe would need to be drawn in a fashion that would place Har Sinai at the top of the globe. Children are unaccustomed to seeing the globe drawn in such a way that the east is drawn on top of the globe and the west on the bottom of the globe. As previously mentioned, the intention was for the initial cover design to convey a message without any lengthy explanations. (It was therefore important to draw the map on the globe in a way that is more familiar to people.)

Another reason (for not placing the globe directly under the luchos and then drawing Har Sinai on the top of the globe) is because then most places of civilization would not appear on the globe, and the illustration is meant to emphasize that Torah and mitzvos are relevant everywhere.

These are the reasons for the luchos being drawn on an angle, because the message is being conveyed through the straight line that runs from the ב"ה, the luchos and the globe.

You ask about the illustration of the globe standing on three pillars - on what do the pillars stand?



It is self understood that your question is essentially about the Mishnah in Pirkei Avos itself, as the cover design is meant to illustrate its most literal meaning. But in truth there is no need to explain this even in the words of the Mishnah since everyone understands that Torah, avoda and gemilus chasadim are not physical pillars upon which the physical world stands. They are all spiritual concepts which certainly have practical application.

Everyone knows that the Torah "stands" and comes from Hashem, the Nosen haTorah. The Mishnah is obviously using figurative speech and there is no room for misunderstanding at all. Just as none of the commentators on Pirkei Avos deal with this question

since the idea is so basic and self understood, so too, in the illustration there is no room for such a misunderstanding.

Mr. Ben Uri also suggested that the three pillars be replaced with the three coordinates of width, length and depth which would represent the three pillars of the world. The Rebbe explained that in addition to the fact that there are various types of coordinate systems, these are concepts only understood by those who have a higher degree of knowledge in physics and mathematics and would be lost on the minds of young children. As the Rebbe emphasized throughout the letter, the purpose of the illustration is to express an idea that would not need much interpretation.

UTILIZING AMERICAN CULTURE

In 5705*, the Rebbe wanted to introduce a new feature in “Talks and Tales,” an illustrated page with five or six items, little known facts about Jewish customs, lore and legend, which would add a new dimension to the publication. A 15-year-old artist named Michel Schwartz, who was learning in the Lubavitcher Yeshiva at the time, was hired to create this new feature, titled “Curiosity Corner,” to be something that the children would look forward to reading from issue to issue.

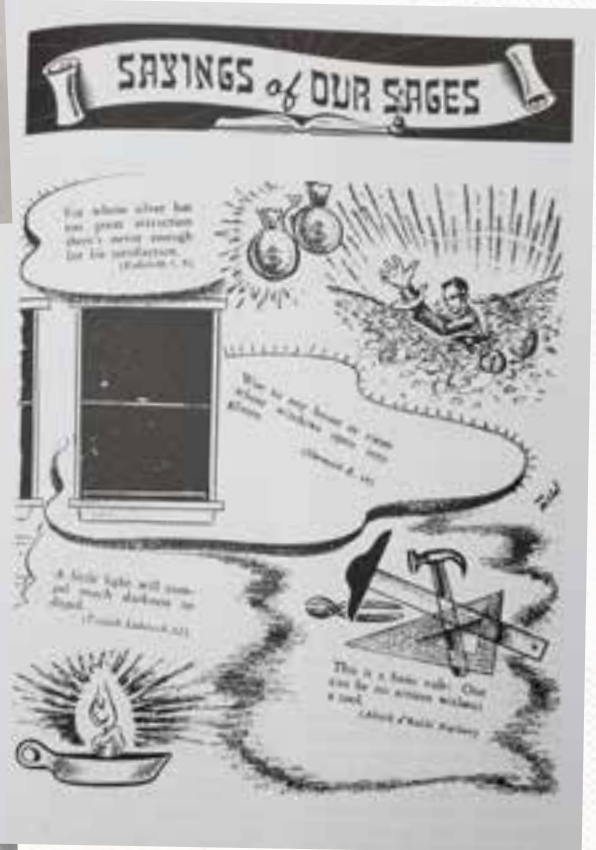
Originally, most of the Rebbe’s ideas were dealt with by Rabbi Mindel. However, very early on, Rabbi Mindel suggested that Michel should report directly

to the Rebbe and was ushered into the Rebbe’s room, known then as the Merkos office, for his first meeting.

“I will never forget this awesome scene,” Michel recalled. “His sparkling blue eyes and welcome smile... without uttering a word. I’m sure I was too young to appreciate the significance of the moment, that I was being invited, by the man who was later to become the greatest of all Rebbes, to execute under his tutelage, some of the earliest pictorial interpretations of Judaism for Lubavitch children’s books.

“When describing the feature,” the Rebbe said, ‘*Es zol oys’zehn vee Ripley*—It should look like Ripley.’ I was taken by surprise.”

For many years, in many newspapers throughout the country, a square measuring approximately 5”x 5”



contained the work of Robert Ripley, titled “Believe It Or Not.” The Rebbe wanted these Torah ideas to be conveyed to Jewish American youth in a way they would relate to culturally as well.

The Curiosity Corner debuted in Teves 5705* and continued for two consecutive years when it was replaced with a similar illustrated column titled “Sayings of Our Sages” for several more years. Both columns appeared in English and Yiddish.

In 5708*, the Rebbe asked Michel to create a true to life character about whom adventure stories could be written and suggested that the format and look should be “like Dick Tracy,” a popular syndicated American comic strip at the time. The comic strip titled “Chusham” appeared in the Talks and Tales from 5708* through 5711*.¹¹

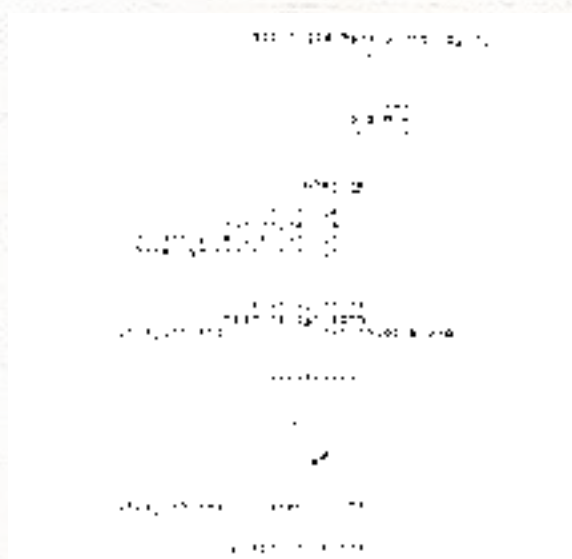
UNENDING INSPIRATION

The long-lasting effects of the dissemination of Talks and Tales are beyond measure. Pages and pages of unadulterated Torah and *yiras Shamayim* shaped generations of hearts and minds and brought them closer to Yiddishkeit. As the Rebbe attested in a letter, in Teves 5703*, after one year of the publication of the Shmuessen and Talks and Tales, “*With Hashem’s help, we have now completed one full year with 24 of these issues [12 in Yiddish and 12 in English], which have captured the hearts of the youth, their teachers and parents.*”¹²

Even today, thousands of young and old readers still enjoy the timeless articles of Talks and Tales, recently reprinted by Kehos with a detailed index. ①

1. Igros Kodesh vol. 1, letter #65.
2. Likkutei Sichos vol. 2 page 370.
3. Igros Kodesh vol. 21 page 16.
4. Igros Kodesh vol. 1 page 94.
5. Ibid. page 36.
6. Ibid. vol. 21 page 255.
7. Igros Kodesh vol. 16, letter #6,075.
8. Igros Kodesh vol. 13, letter #4,689.
9. Lishkas Lubavitch—the Lubavitch Office of Europe.
10. Igros Kodesh vol. 18 p. 303.
11. The Rebbe and the Artist, www.chabad.org/375089
12. Igros Kodesh vol. 1, letter #34.

A LETTER FROM DR. NISSAN MINDEL NOTING THAT THE REBBE WANTED THE PUBLICATION OF A TALKS AND TALES INDEX. (IT WAS EVENTUALLY PUBLISHED BY KEHOT IN 5780.)



COVER OF THE FIRST EDITION OF THE SHMUESSEN.

A LETTER FROM RABBI HODAKOV TO RABBI GERSHON MENDEL GARELIK, INFORMING HIM THAT THE ISSUES OF SHMUESSEN AND TALKS HAD BEEN SHIPPED TO ITALY FOR TRANSLATION.

RABBI LEVI GARELIK