

Alfred Baker Fonds

Chemistry and Art
More Adventures of a Chemist Collector

Chapter 2 -
Marvin Klitsner

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Chapter 2

Marvin Klitsner

The greatest influence on my business life, and often on my personal life, was Marvin Klitsner^(fig.). Our truly treasured friendship developed over a period of almost half a century. Marvin and I met in 1954 through his daughters, first Francie and then Betsy, who were in my Sunday School class at Temple Emanu-El B'ne Jeshurun on the east side in Milwaukee. The following year, he and I were together at the Bnai Brith retreat in August where we met Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, a charismatic teacher. Heschel spoke about other people building "palaces in space" while Jews built a "palace in time" and called it the Sabbath.

That meeting changed the Klitsners' lives. Marvin was eager to study more. Rabbi Heschel advised him that Rabbi David Shapiro was the best possible scholar in Milwaukee. Although both of our families already attended his synagogue, Congregation Anshe Sfard, we lived on the east side and had to drive to the west side of Milwaukee. Marvin and Jane decided they would sell their home and move nearer to Rabbi Shapiro, the synagogue, and his classes. Marvin so honored the Sabbath because he felt it was such an important holiday that it was distinguished above all others. He celebrated it inspirationally with his entire family every Sabbath - even on the day of his death.

Marvin was a partner in one of Milwaukee's largest and most prestigious law firms, respected nationally: Foley, Sammond and Lardner (now Foley & Lardner), and when he finally ended his practice in 1988, was Senior Partner there. When I became the sole owner of Aldrich in May 1955, he really began helping the company. He became a



Director of Aldrich in 1961 and a member of the Executive Committee and, until our joint painful dismissal, was my trusted advisor and mentor at Aldrich and Sigma-Aldrich.

Thinking of what Foley & Lardner charges now for its legal services, I have to smile on reading in the first prospectus of Aldrich's common stock in December 1965, "The law firm of Foley, Sammond and Lardner, of which Marvin E. Klitsner is a partner, was paid \$750 during the last fiscal year." I am glad that, as a small thank you, I persuaded him to buy 30,000 shares of Aldrich, about 5 percent of the company, at \$1 a share. His advice was vital to the continued growth of the company.

We worked together on so many other projects as well. He joined me on the Board of Directors of Rabbi Shapiro's synagogue and in the founding of the Hillel Academy, Milwaukee's only Jewish day school at the time. We started the Bader-Klitsner Foundation, which helped Jewish causes in Milwaukee and Israel, and B&K Enterprises, doing business as Alfred Bader Fine Arts, which is now owned 50 percent by my two sons and 50 percent by Marvin's nineteen grandchildren. He had the great wisdom to have me give each of my sons' trusts 6.5 percent of Aldrich stock when that was worth very little. Our daily contact over more than thirty years continued after he retired from Foley & Lardner, and even after he and Jane moved to Israel in 1988.

Marvin gave me the gift of his inspiring friendship, his omniscient expertise, and his support in decision-making. Marvin was my MENTOR, my most dear friend. He was so respected, so trustworthy, so sincere, and so honest that during my divorce from my first wife, Danny, he served as attorney for her as well as for me. He helped Danny write her will, leading to the Helen Bader Foundation, and similarly helped Isabel and me



to write our wills, with the same aim. My greatest sorrow has been his death in 2001 and the deep loss that I feel in so many aspects of my life.

How can I say thank you to such a man? Only by working hard for Alfred Bader Fine Arts, with half of its profits going to Marvin's grandchildren. For with his son, Steven, I can say that every significant action or decision of mine is consciously or subconsciously driven or measured by "What would Marvin say? What would he think? What would he do?" But I cannot be clearer than the eulogy given by Steven in Jerusalem on 12 August 2001.

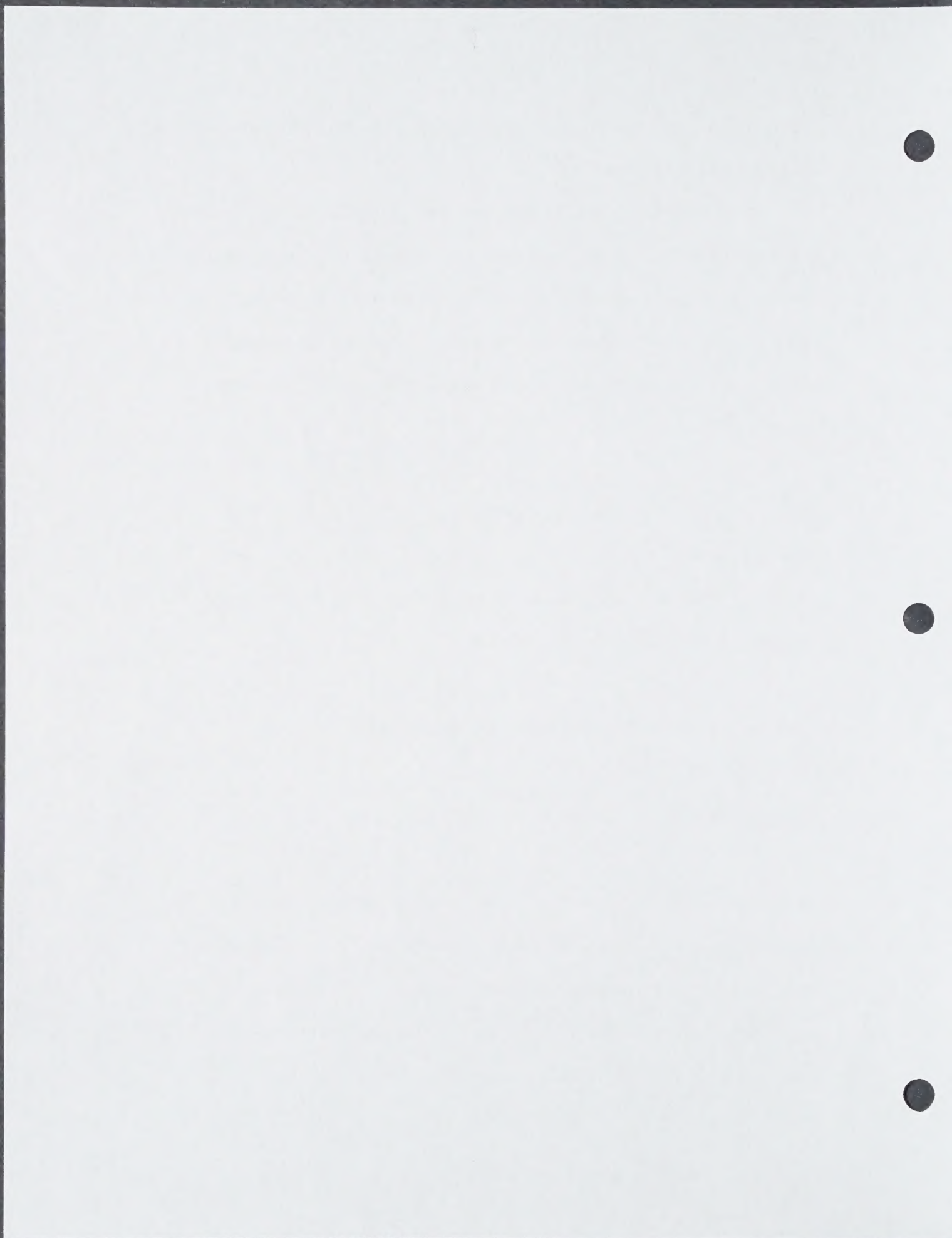
Steve's Hespel (Eulogy) for Dad

Abba, Saba, how can I begin to paint a portrait of your magnificent life? I can't. I already apologized to Mom, that neither I, nor anyone else, could do justice to the work of art that has been your life.

PURE GOODNESS AND KINDNESS WRAPPED IN GREAT WISDOM.

EMANATING LOVE AND SURROUNDED BY LOVE.

All this accompanied by the power and determination to translate all that goodness and wisdom and love into *maasim tovim*, (acts of goodness), not just individual *maasim tovim*, but a well-woven tapestry, a life strategy to transform yours and Savta's lives, the lives of your children, and their children, your *kehilla* [a glossary of Hebrew terms used here can be found at the end of this chapter], and even *klal Yisrael*. You had such great

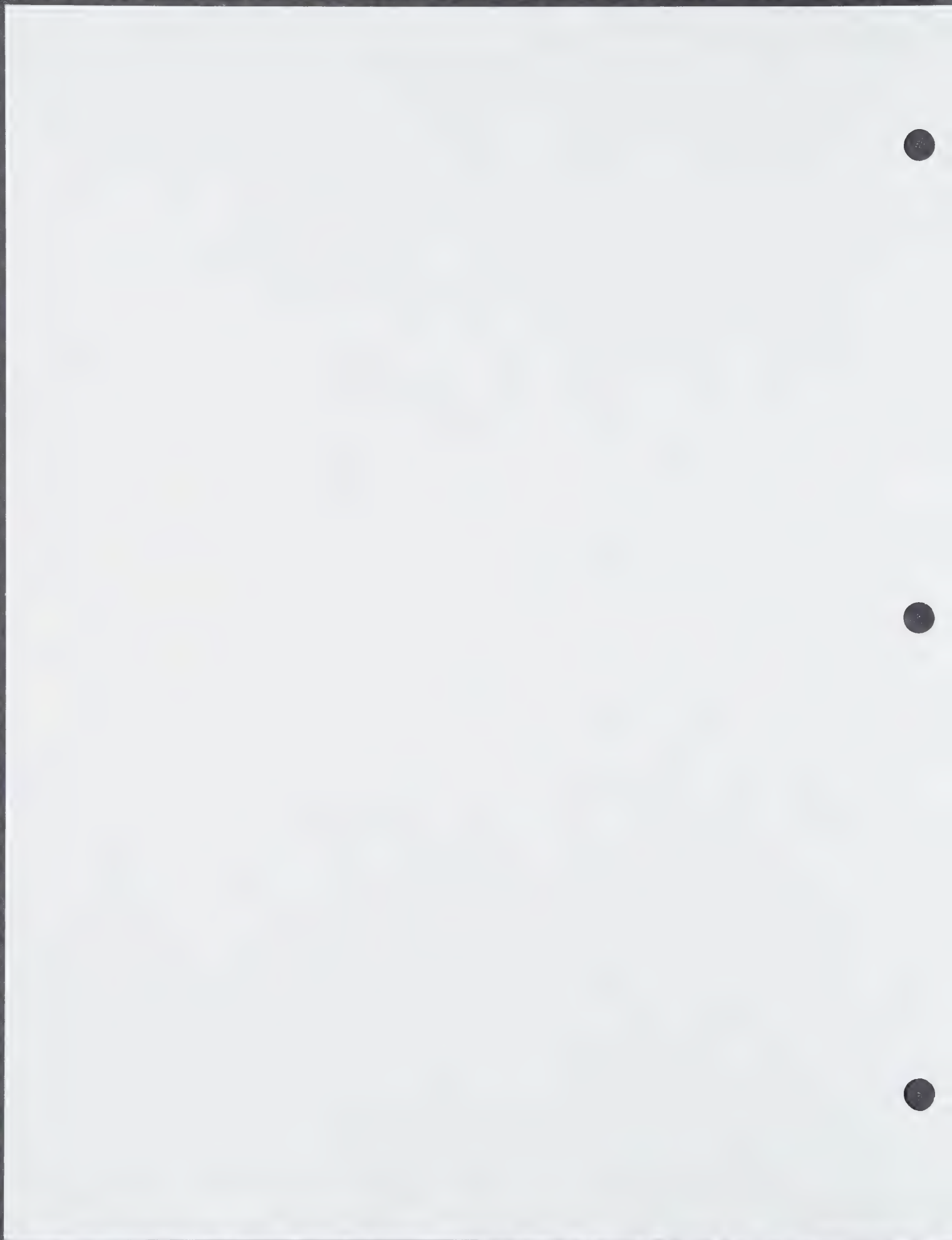


dreams, such great plans, and you quietly and humbly set about realizing them, while attributing everything ultimately to Hashem - and to Savta.

We love you, Mom. I won't even try to describe the great love story of your life together. Francie once confided to me that sometimes it was even embarrassing to witness the intimacy and love in the look of his eyes for you and in yours for him, and this, as an unwavering constant for more than fifty-two years.

Many of your wonderful friends who are here, who love you so dearly, are relatively new friends, over the last decade since your *aliya*. They grew to love you, Dad, while mainly knowing you as a kind, intelligent, and giving friend, a quiet man in his retirement years, still making the most of each hour, of each day. But how can I convey to your friends the totality of your life as a tour de force, as a powerful influence on whole communities, and upon countless individuals?

Dad, the end of your life was exquisite, as was your life, and your struggle to stay alive one more hour until Shabbat, and to share the same Yahrzeit as Rabbi Shapiro zt"l, whose life was so influential upon and influenced by yours. This somehow conformed to the same spiritual logic that guided your life. The story is an amazing one, almost impossible, yet entirely consistent with a divine *hashgacha* that defies rational explanation, but absolutely conforms to the metaphysical coherence of your life.



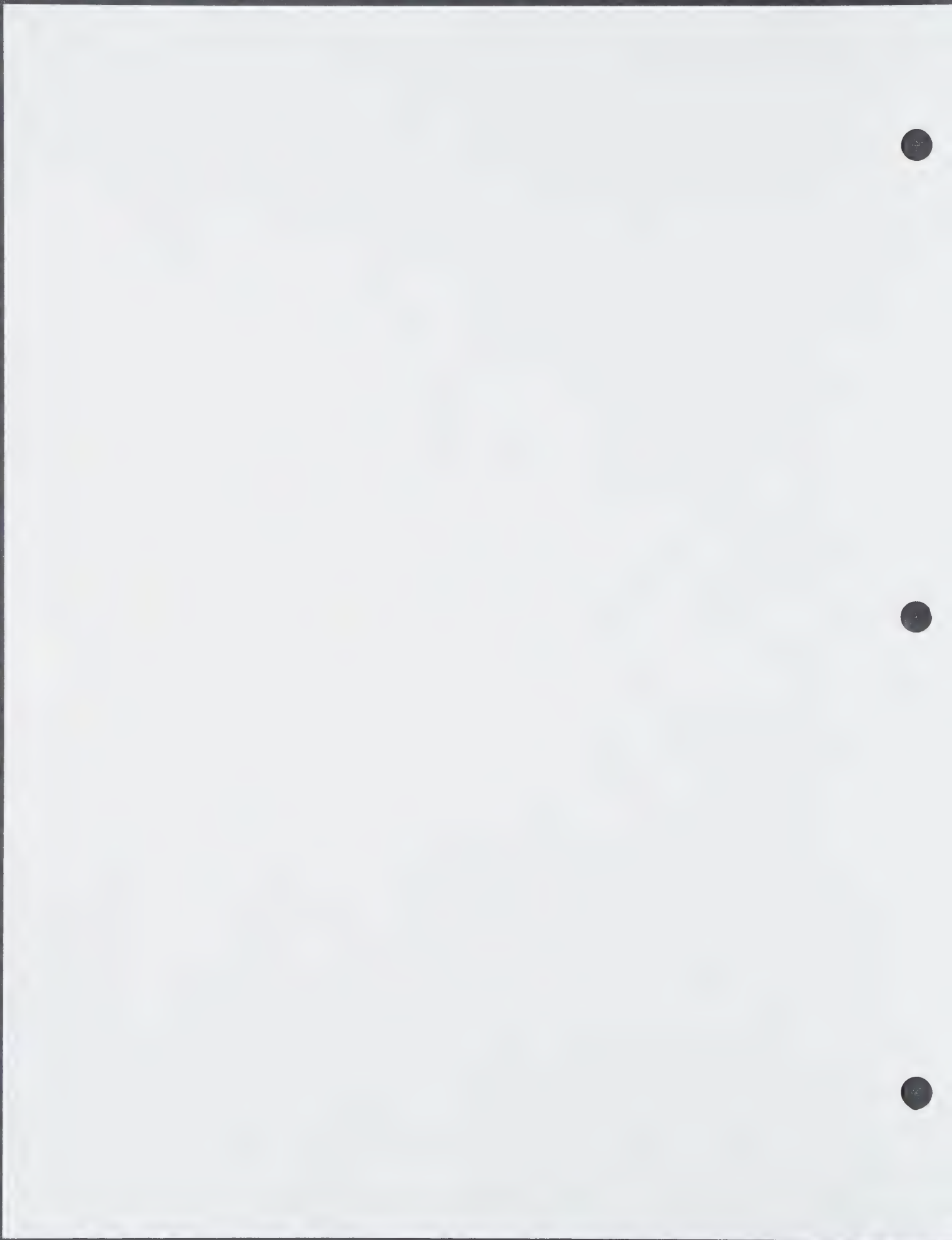
Our father, Saba, was born in Augusta, Wisconsin, nearly eighty-three years ago to the only Jewish family in town. How does one begin life in a small town, a marginally affiliated Jew, and manage to come home to Torah, to come home to Yerushalayim, and to lead countless others on the journey?

It's as if you had an inborn homing device tuned to the frequency of truth, of *chesed*, of Torah, of Jerusalem, of Hashem.

Saba grew up in the context of a typical middle-America life. The works. Including playing on the high school football team, working in his father's store, and selling encyclopedias to farmers off country roads. He made history at the University of Wisconsin. The last time anyone checked, he still had the record for achievement and honors at the law school there.

One of his professors once said, "If Marvin Klitsner told me the sun was rising in the west, I'd go look."

In the navy, in the Pacific, as an officer, he was one of the first to be trained in the new radar technology. I later understood that Dad was never afraid to learn anything new. In a major trial on behalf of a pharmaceutical company involving neo-natology, he became expert enough in the field to cross examine world-class medical experts. It's one of the things he loved about law - constant challenge and exposure to new worlds.



You always told us, Dad, that the most important and best decision you ever made was marrying Mom. We agree. But in your own words, the event that changed the course of our family history took place in August of 1955. Dad, allow me to quote from your letter to us that we received from Mom only last night.

“It is interesting...to speculate about what would have happened had we at any fork in the road, taken another path....It is true that we were searching for something meaningful at the time of the Bnai Brith Institute in the summer of 1955. There we first met Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel....I had taken that midnight walk in the woods of northern Wisconsin with Rabbi Heschel on that *motzaei Shabbat* (while Jane, pregnant with Steve, took Francie and Betsy back to the cabin to put them to sleep); he had suggested that we take on one mitzvah until it became a part of our lives, and then add another, and another. There [had] been the feeling that I was seized by both shoulders and urged to sit at the feet of Milwaukee’s greatest treasure, Rabbi David Shapiro....[Without this there would never have been the] thought of becoming involved in building and sending Steve to a day school. That and more was attributable to Rabbi Shapiro.

“There followed step by step, as suggested by Rabbi Heschel, the process of our becoming *dati*; to begin with, kashering the house, no longer going to the office on Shabbat, no longer eating out...the establishment of Hillel Academy and the decision a year later to send Steve there, the purchase by Grandma and Grandpa of the 55th Street house, and the establishment of our Shabbat home in their upstairs space, ceasing to use the telephone or car on Shabbat....In the midst of it all there was the process of limiting



our social and family engagements to avoid conflict with *halacha*, and getting clients, courts, partners, and associates, as well as the school authorities, to understand that we were unavailable for business or office matters from some hour on Friday until Saturday night, as well as on Yom Tov. All of that process occurred with the participation and encouragement of our children. Rabbi Shapiro never pushed, but was there to answer questions and to provide an inspiring example. We cannot recall any other examples or even company from our generation and social friends [in this journey].”

Very early on, Dad underlined a line from Heschel, saying that the infinite God is of such a nature that He is either of prime significance or of none. The road to *shmirat mitzvot* was clear to you, Dad. And it intimately involved the great inspiration of Rabbi David S. Shapiro. Dad, you were one of the only people in Milwaukee at the time capable of appreciating this saintly man of giant intellect and great humility. This is because you were cut from the same cloth. The love was mutual, and the influence which we speak of at every family *simcha* was also mutual. We always emphasized the rabbi’s influence on you. But now, Dad, I can relate, but because of your modesty only a small part, of how you impacted upon his life and his ability to contribute to *klal Yisrael*.

Career and professional decisions made together with Mom (everything was always together with Mom), such as not to accept a law professorship, or not to accept chief counsel of Wisconsin Telephone, or not to accept the presidency of Aldrich - each decision was guided by a value system that emphasized family, community *and* the road already embarked upon towards *shmirat mitzvot*.



I want to read to all of you one small section of Dad's letter to the three children, much of which reads like an ethical will. This may give you some small idea of the kind of thinking and values that he and Mom tried to teach us:

“Material things can be ugly or beautiful, depending on how they are acquired and how they are utilized; depending upon whether their acquisition becomes an end in and of itself, or a means of achieving worthwhile objectives...whether they are acquired and utilized ethically or by questionable means or with questionable objectives. One might even say that it is in connection with material matters that most ethical dilemmas present themselves. Whether one accepts a position for which he lacks qualifications, or enters into a transaction without full disclosure of all known relevant facts, or accepts a full day's pay for less than a full day's work, or undertakes to counsel someone without full preparation or ability to do so, or performs an act of kindness without disclosing a selfish motive, or engages in any act with his fellow man with less than complete integrity - all of these situations or temptations involve ethical or moral dilemmas which constantly put us to the test. And any deviation from total self-integrity, no matter how insignificant it seems at the time, can chip away at the soul. Thank *Hashem*, we do not have to talk to our children about outright dishonesty or about ethics as such; however, none of us are totally immune from the ever-present daily pitfalls unless we constantly keep on the alert for them.”

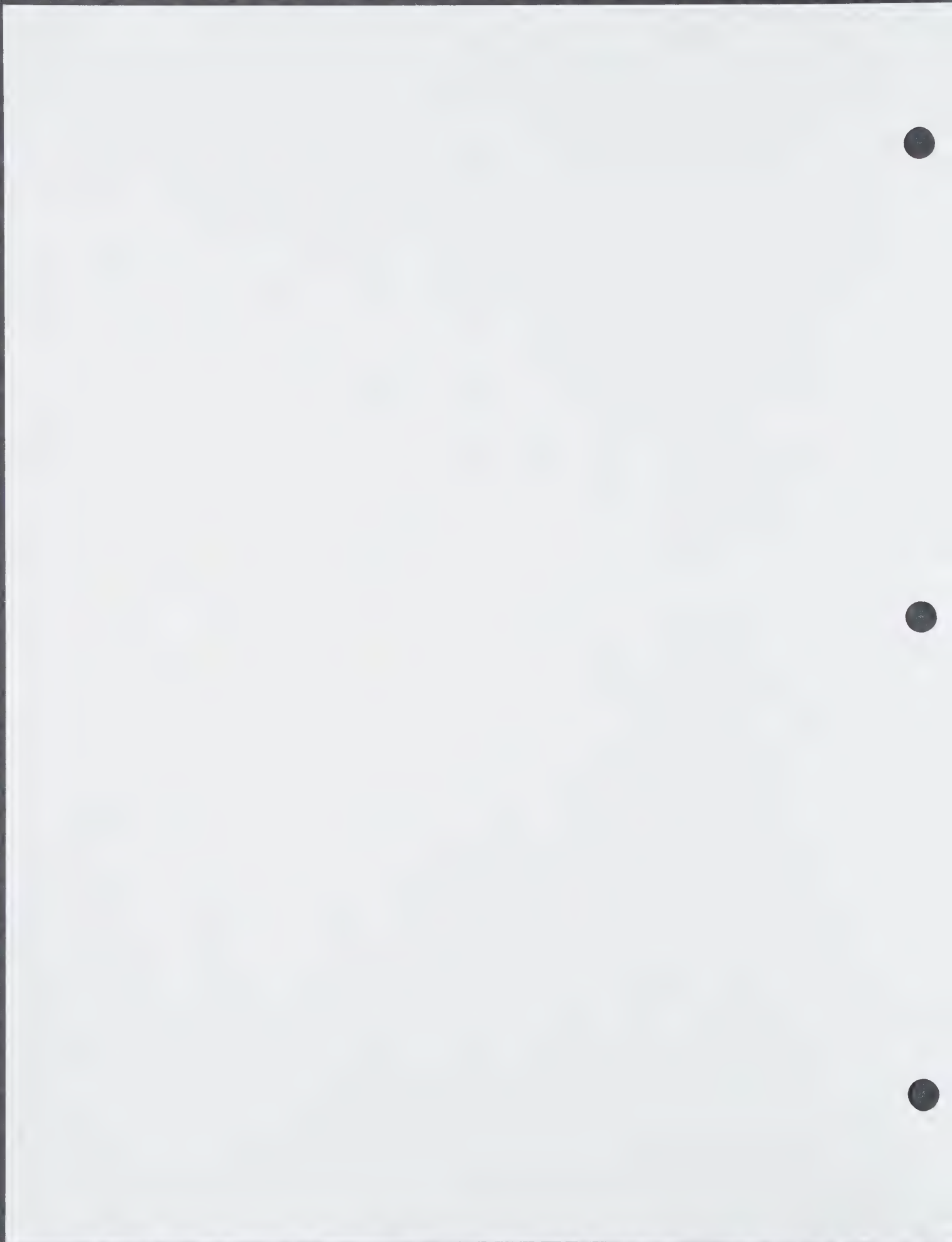


Clients knew that despite the most scrupulous legal and moral constraints of your counsel, Dad, that your genius, your incisive mind, your creative thinking, in short, your wisdom, would lead them to the shores of success as well as to the moral high ground. So many wealthy clients attributed their success to you, Dad, and because of their love and admiration for you, they would also follow your advice and guidance to ever-greater and wisely chosen acts of philanthropy.

I know that one of your great feelings of accomplishment, Abba, came from suggesting, planning, and setting up the Helen Bader Foundation, with all of the important work it does for thousands, in Milwaukee and here in Israel - for Alzheimer research and care, for Russian and Ethiopian *olim*, and for so many institutions of learning and *chesed*.

Dad, none of your values remained in the realm of the abstract or theoretical. Through your wisdom, your goodness, and the power of your God-given gifts, you always managed to translate these values into action:

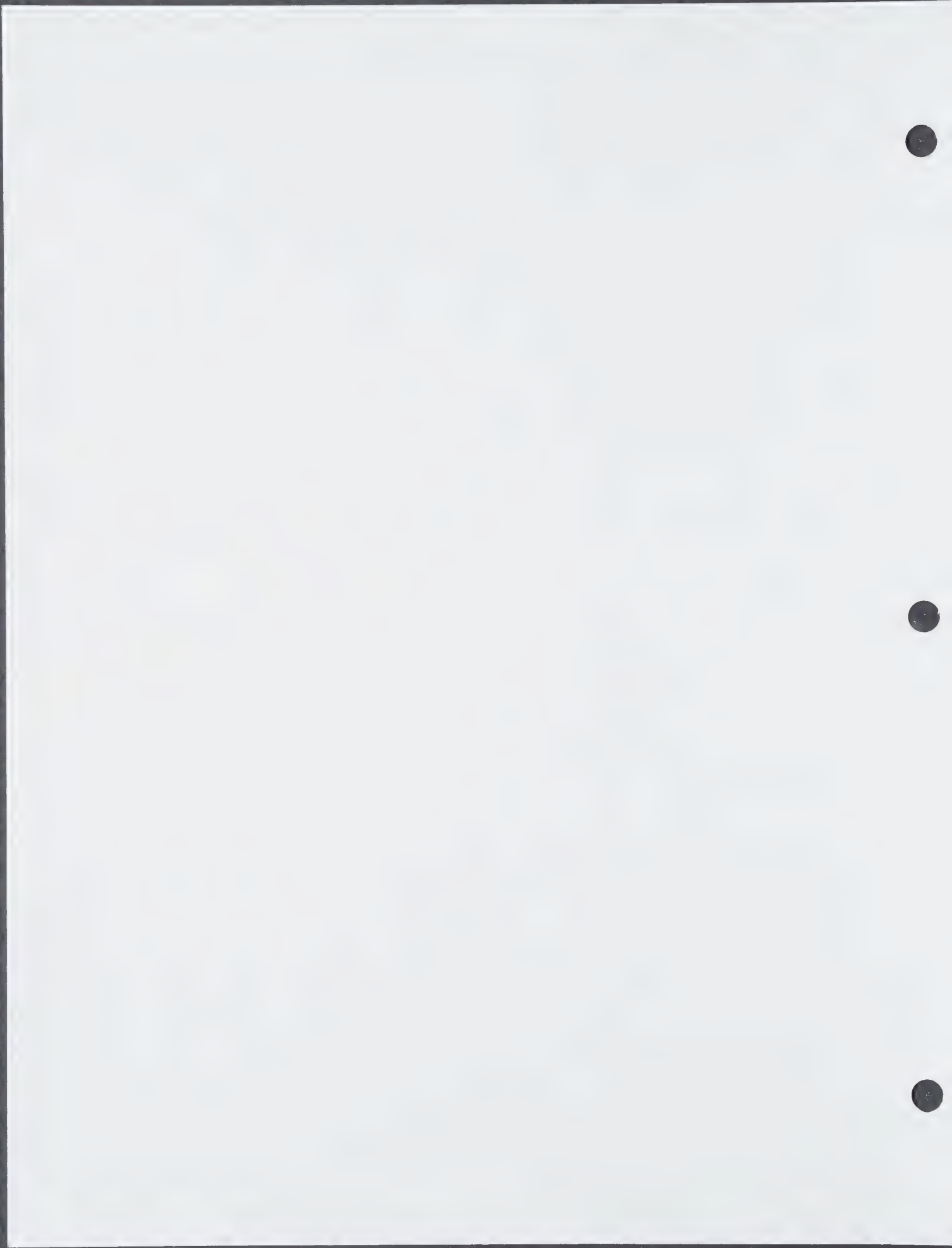
- Your love of Zion became crucial help to the State of Israel, leading the middle-sized Jewish community of Milwaukee to what at the time, under your leadership, as president of the Milwaukee Jewish Federation, led the world's communities in highest per-capita monetary contributions to Israel. The methods you devised with Mel Zaret in our den on Circle Drive then became a model for other communities and federations. It was inevitable that your love of Zion would also translate into *aliya* for yourselves and for all of your children.



- Your dedication to Jewish education translated into creating the first Jewish day school in Milwaukee - you and Rabbi Shapiro. There was no Orthodox community to speak of, so you created American Jewish history by creating the first Jewish-Federation-sponsored day school. Torah Umesora told you it couldn't be done. The school would not long remain Orthodox. But you knew better. It's still Federation sponsored forty years later, and it's still Orthodox. You were so certain that you were also willing to stake your own son's education on an experiment that others of less vision tried to discourage you from.

Thank you, Dad, for not listening to them.

- Your love and appreciation for Torah didn't remain in the realm of abstract emotion. It translated into the adoption of your soul-mate, Rabbi Shapiro, into seeing his books published, and in sponsoring other works of Torah including the important *commentary* on Exodus of Benno Jacob. It also led you to offer your skills and time in helping edit Rabbi Quint's many volumes of *The Restatement of Jewish Law*. And in your later years, after founding schools and sponsoring *yeshivot*, you finally joined one. Rabbi Quint, learning with you and your group of men in their sixties, seventies, and eighties, many, like Dad, learning Talmud seriously for the first time - it meant so much to him. Mom told us yesterday of how fond Dad was of quoting Rabbi Steinzaltz, who asked why Jews talk about 120 year life spans, and answered, "So that we will have the gumption to start new things in our seventies and eighties."

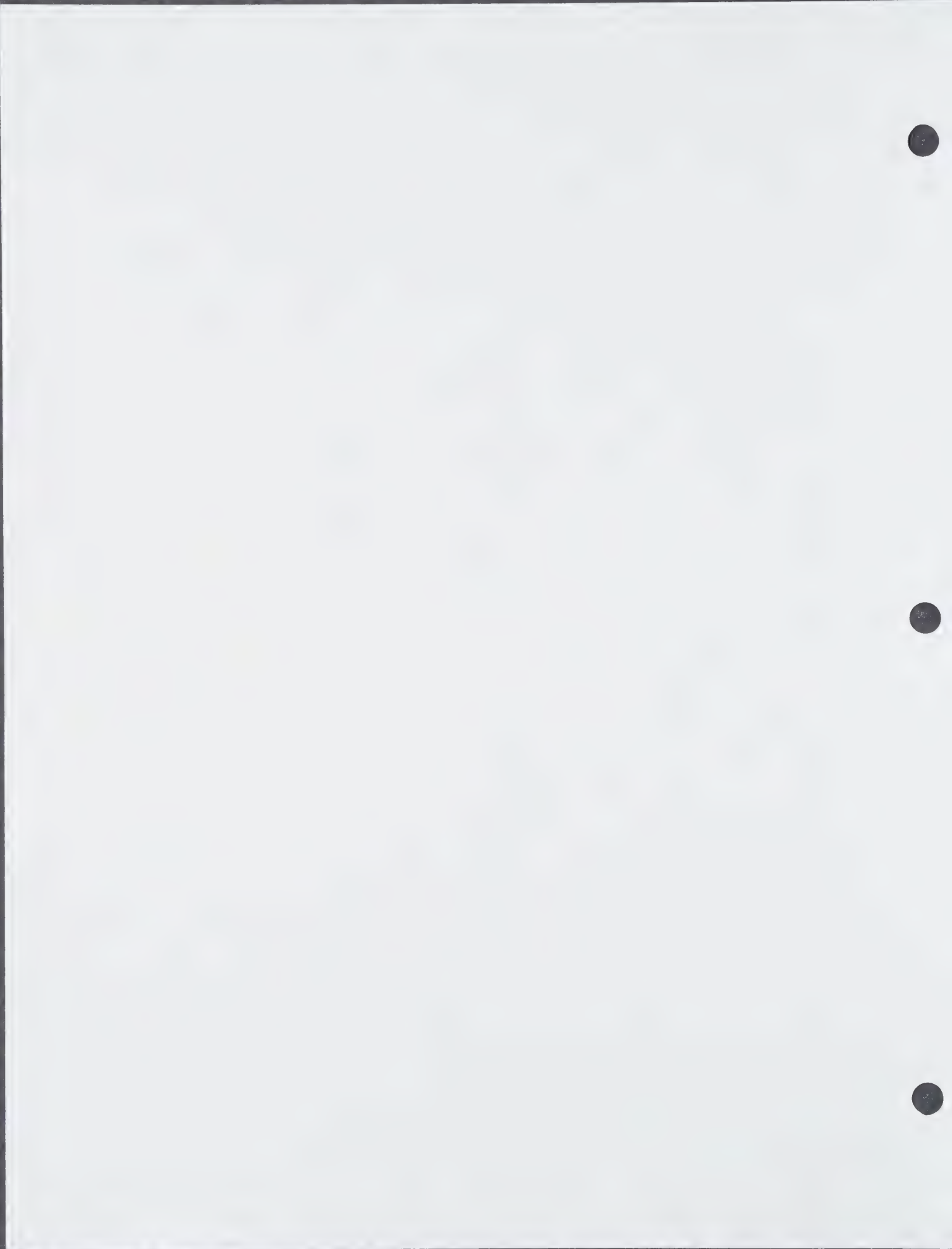


- Dad, your *hakarat hatov*, your gratitude to *Hashem*, which was always on your lips and in your heart for all of these beautiful and healthy grandchildren and great-grandchildren, translated directly into your desire to help Udi found and develop Tsaad Kadima, a revolutionary system of care and advancement for children with CP.

Some people hold wonderful value systems; few make them a reality with such consistency and brilliance.

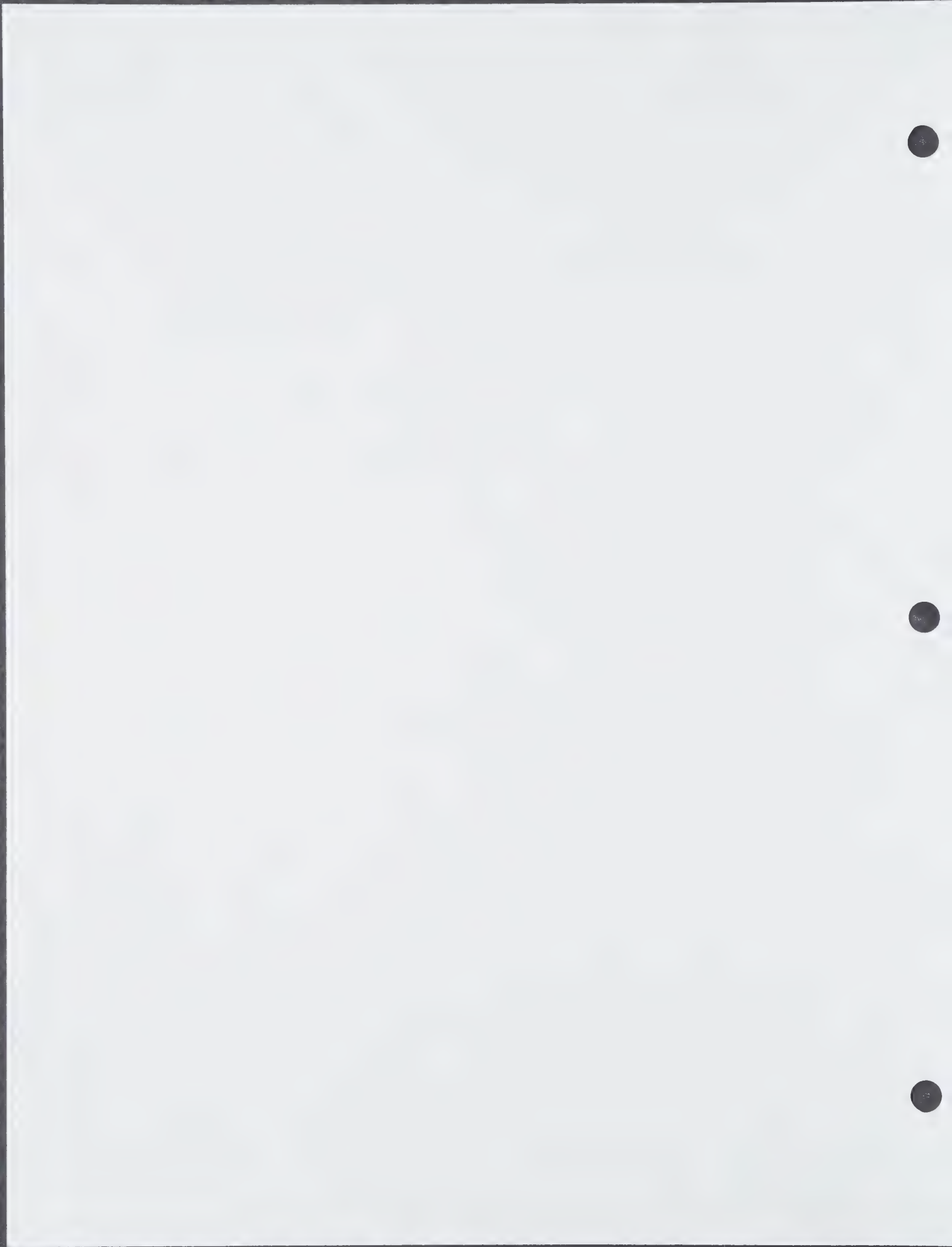
Dad, even more difficult than giving a hint of who you were for klal Yisrael, is to speak as a son, to speak on behalf of Francie and Betsy. Dad, everything we have and everything we are starts with you - you and Mom. You have been our loving Abba, whose hugs warmed us on cold Wisconsin mornings. "Dad is home from work!" And we would run to your arms, the highlight of our day. You are our compass, our counselor, our teacher, our moral guide. Every significant action or decision is consciously or subconsciously driven or measured by, "What would Dad say? What would he think? What would he do?"

Until now, we would come to you, and now we are bereft. Questions will arise - life questions, moral issues, the need for practical advice. Your *kol*, your voice, will be thunderously silent for us. But I believe we carry within us a *bat kol* from you. I think I know what the *midrash* was talking about when it described Yosef as always having *dmut d'yukno shel aviv lefanav* - a graphic image of his father's presence before him.



We will always have that to guide us. To paraphrase the poet, "You are our north, our south, our east, our west, our working week, our Shabbos rest."

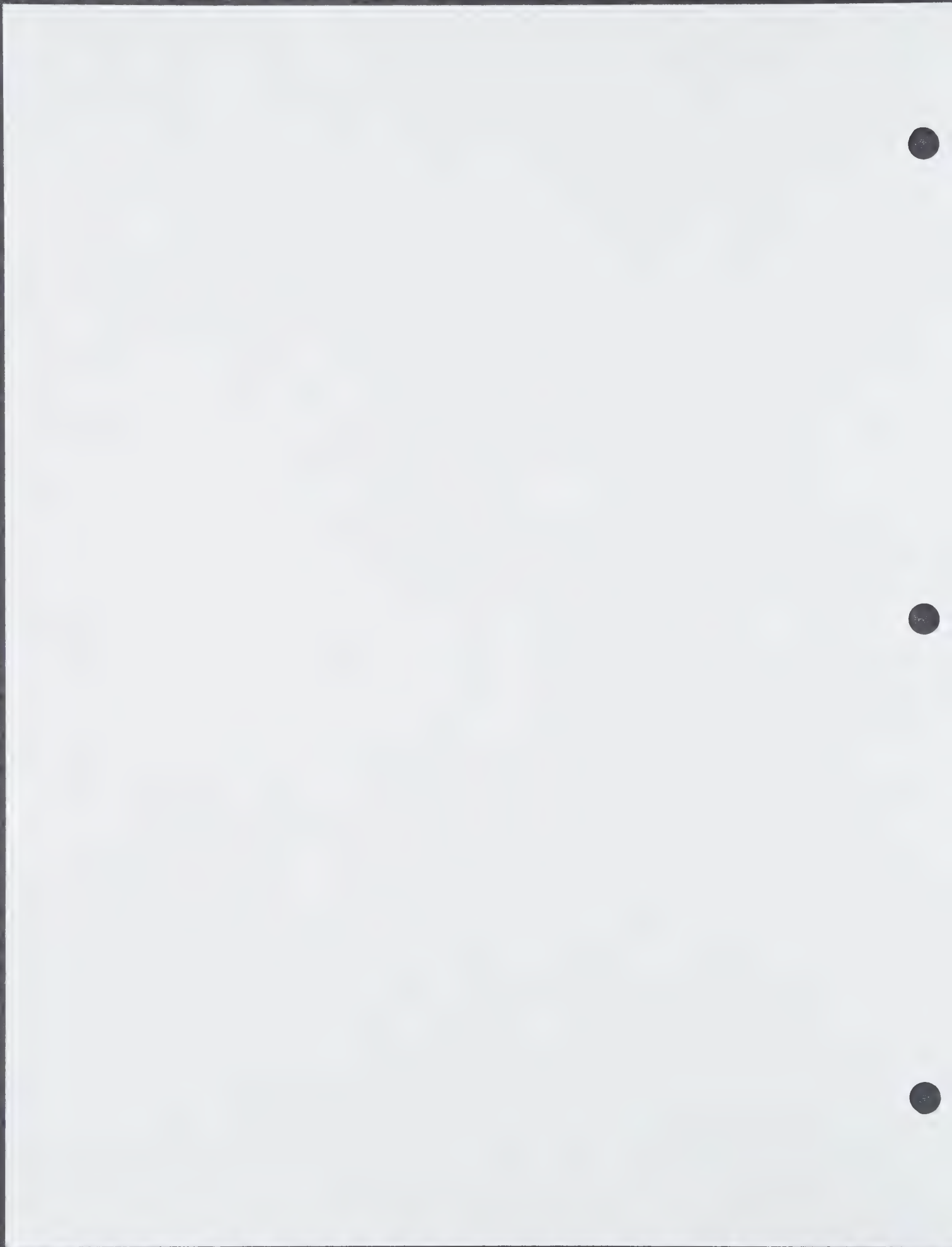
I began by talking of pure goodness and kindness, wrapped in great wisdom, emanating love. Dad, I now have to speak about your endless capacity for love. I've spoken of your love for Mom, of your love for Torah and for *klal Yisrael*, but I must turn for a moment to the other great loves of your life. Your children: only three biologically, but you always said you had six children, including Denny, Mendel, and Judy. As son to father, I've chosen an almost humorous anecdote to reflect the extent of your devotion. Sending me to the fledgling day school you founded resulted in my being the only kid in the school from our side of town, with a rather lonely after-school social life. You and Mom tried to compensate by spending time with me in ways that included Mom pitching baseball to me in the back yard, and Dad shooting baskets with me in the driveway. Perhaps the most extreme act of devotion, Dad, was your joining a boy scout-like father and son organization called Indian Guides, where grown men and their sons sat on floors of various living rooms each week, exchanging platitudes of friendship ("Pals forever, dad - pals forever, son"), and building teepees and going camping. I knew it was ridiculous, you know it was stupid - but nothing was beneath your dignity in your school of devoted parenting. You stayed because you wanted me to have friends. I stayed because I loved being with you. Later we would find our time more wisely spent learning together, but those hours as Big and Little Osceola are no less precious than our hours with *masechet Yoma*.



Your next great love, Saba, is as a Saba - and I can't just mention them as "the grandchildren and great-grandchildren," because for you, Saba and Savta, they aren't just a group or category. Each one is special to you. You know their idiosyncrasies, their special traits, and strengths. You delight in their successes and share in their struggles. Your love for the Wolff children: Ephraim and Tamar, Nomi and David, Yoni and Chagit, Michael and Tamar, Rachel and Miriam, Sara and Yael. And for the Shapiro children: Adina and Zvi, Dani and Yitzchak, Avi and Tamar. And for our children: Akiva and Noam, Nechama, Yisrael and Amitai. You and Mom love each one uniquely. The incredible *bar* and *bat mitzvah* trips you and they treasured as bonding time without the parents. To see you, Saba, with the great-grandchildren - Yishai, Chana, Re'ut, Shalom, Shira, Mordechai Aviad, and Hallel - was to see a man experiencing the paradise of the world to come.

Your love and devotion for your parents, Grandpa Harry and Grandma Sara, extended to Mom's mother, whom you could never refer to as "mother-in-law," only as "Mother." You were always in her prayers, and she in yours. She is experiencing mourning now in Milwaukee, as are your loving siblings, Uncles Sid, Irv, and Stu, and Aunt Miriam on the West Coast.

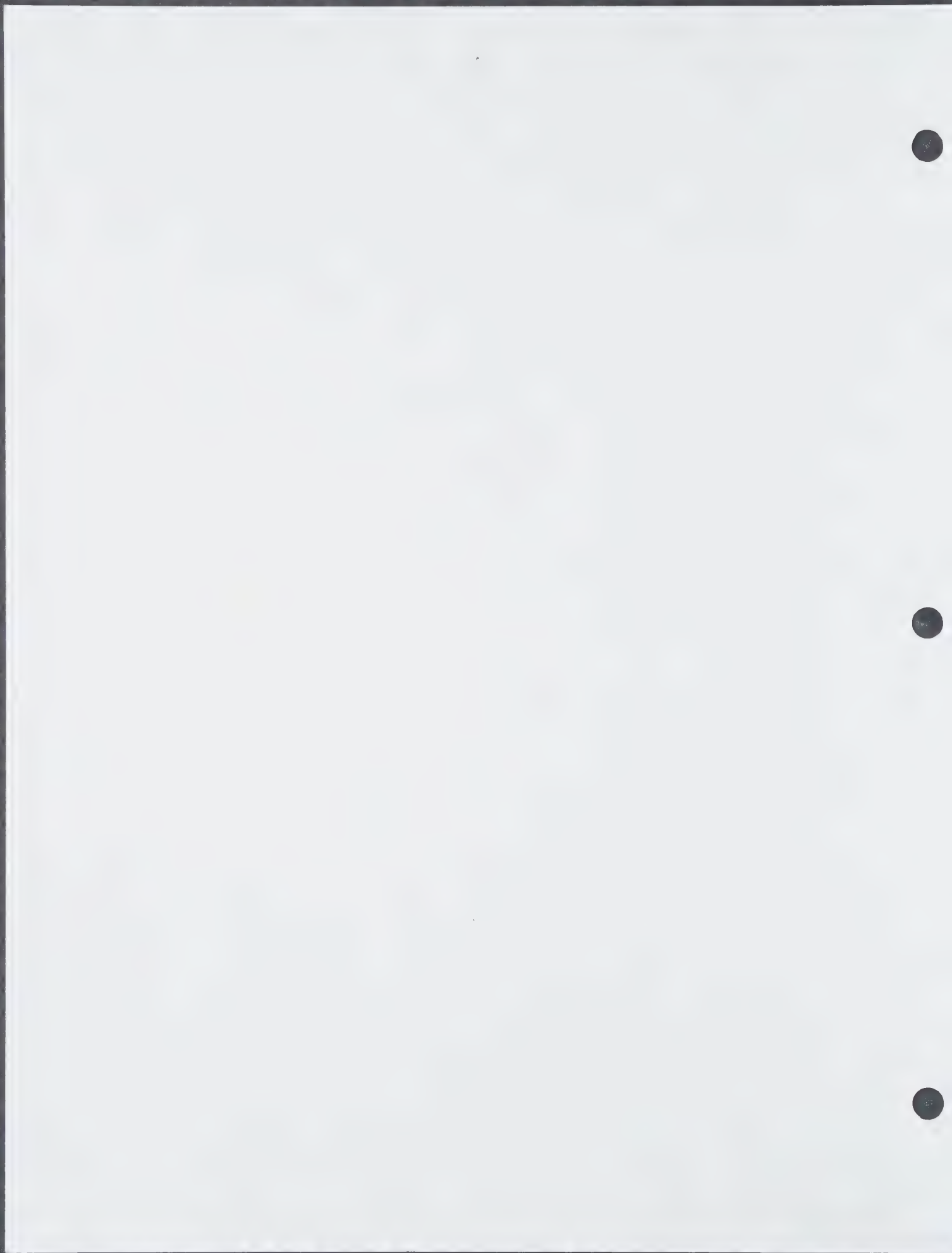
Dad, you so loved Shabbat. Heschel's book, *The Sabbath*, inspired us, but it was the real experience of Shabbat that captivated you. So many people discovered Shabbat at our table, and those who thought they knew Shabbat experienced a new level of experience at your table.



The last hours, Dad, surrounded by family, with Francie already traveling towards us and connected to you by telepathy and heartstrings - you waited till Shabbat. Just one more *Lechu neranena*, which we said together. Just one more *lecha dodi*, which we sang at your side. At the very end, you seemed to be gasping for just one more breath, and then another. I believe you did this in order to depart this world on your beloved Shabbos, as well as on the very *Yahrtzeit* of your beloved Rabbi Shapiro, twelve years ago to the day.

You left us at the very moment we recited *shema Yisrael* with you, all of us together - in Mom's embrace. All your great loves - Mom, family, Rabbi Shapiro, Shabbos, Yerushalayim - all coming together in the final notes of a symphonic masterpiece that was your entire life. Did you merit this exquisite moment of departure because of all the *chesed*? All the *tzedaka*? All the love? Or because, old and frail, you flew across the world to bury your cousin Leajeane and speak at her grave? Or because you once flew across the U.S. to bury a fellow Jew whom you had met only once in your office years before - a man without any family (a *met mitzvah*)? Or was it because you so graciously agreed and encouraged me to say *kaddish* for Judy's father?

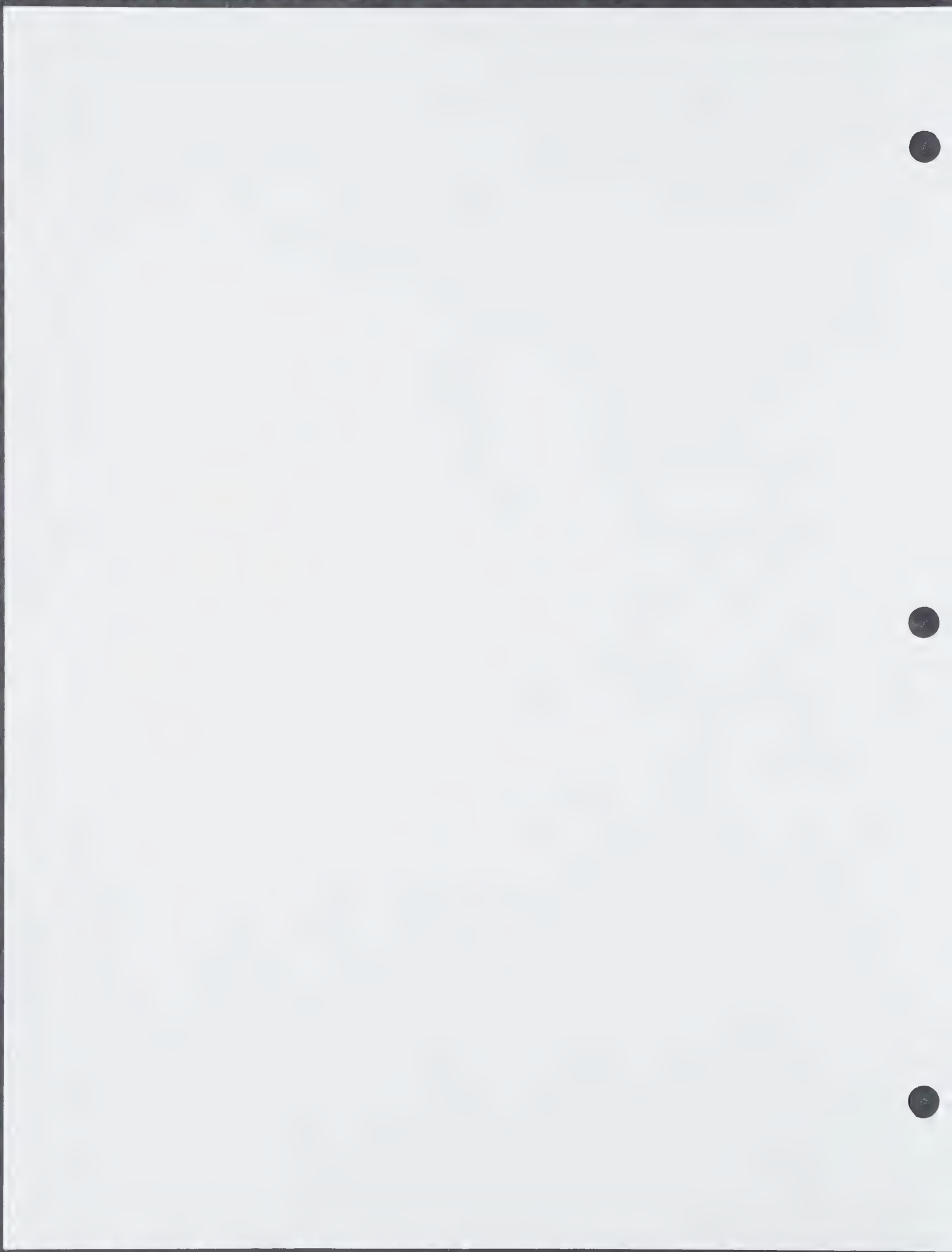
Dad, we tried our best. On Shabbat, David and his father, Eliezer Ansbacher, were your *shomrim* (guardians), insisting on dividing the twenty-one hours of Shabbat between them, *tzaddikim* accompanying a *tzaddik*. And from *motzaei* Shabbat, your grandchildren wanted to be your *shomrim* - how fitting, how beautiful.



But if in your life and if in your afterlife, we have been remiss or negligent, or if there were times we showed less than the infinite respect and love we feel for you, please grant us forgiveness.

Finally, Dad, while God miraculously spared you most of the pain of cancer, you so deeply felt the pain of *am Yisrael* in these difficult times. Only hours before you left us, you were aware that Judy and I and Sara were in this very hall at the funeral of fifteen-year-old Malki Roth, the victim of savage terrorism. We know that now, as you approach the heavenly bench, the *kise hakavod*, the Divine throne, you will be the most effective defense attorney, defending *am Yisrael*, arguing passionately on behalf of your greatest desire and wish, peace for your nation, Israel.

May your soul be bound with the bonds of eternal life, and your memory a blessing.



Glossary of Hebrew Terms:

Abba - father

Aliya - (lit) ascent to Israel, emigration

Am Yisrael - the nation of Israel or Jewish people

Bat kol - an inner resonance, a voice's echo

Chesed - acts of loving kindness

Dati - religiously observant of the commandments of the Torah

Hashem - God

Hashgacha - divine providence

Hesped - eulogy

Kaddish - the prayer for the deceased

Kehilla - community

Klal Yisrael - the entire community of Israel, the world over

"Lecha dodi" - "Come, my beloved Sabbath queen," central hymn of the Friday evening Sabbath service

"Lechu neranena" - lit. "let us sing" - the first words of the Friday evening Sabbath service

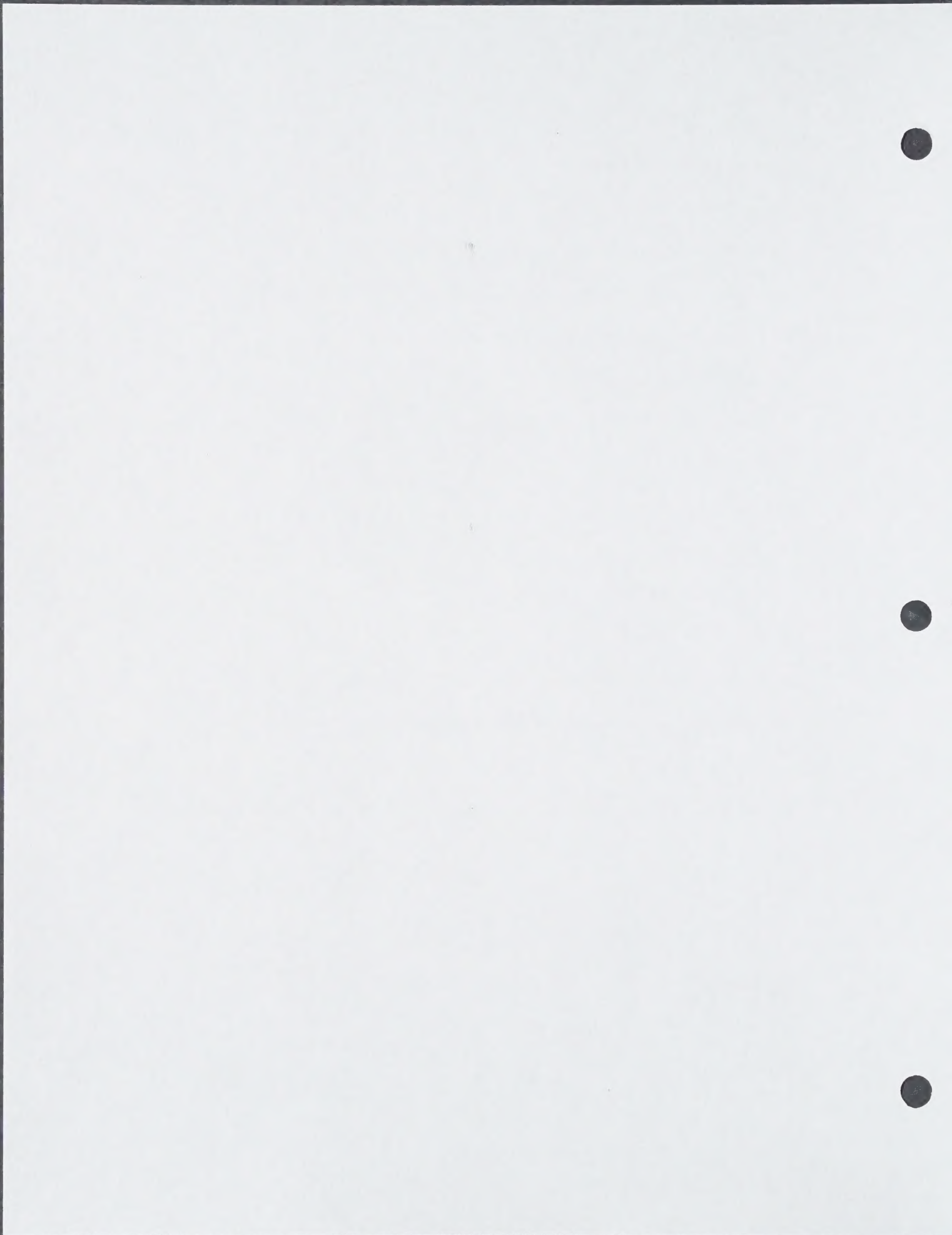
Maasim tovim - good deeds

Masechet Yoma - a tractate of the Talmud

Met mitzvah - a dead person with no family to bury him

Midrash - ancient Bible commentary

Olim - immigrants to Israel



Saba - grandfather (Marvin)

Savta - grandmother (Jane)

Shabbat (Shabbos) - the Sabbath

Shmirat mitzvoth - observance of Jewish law

Shomrim - lit. guardians, people who volunteer to remain vigilant near the body of the deceased (usually reciting psalms) until the burial

Simcha - joyous occasion

Torah Umesorah - the national organization of Jewish day schools

Tzaddik - righteous person (plural - tzaddikim)

Tzedaka - charity, philanthropy

Yahrtzeit - Yiddish for the anniversary of one's death (Dad's is the 22nd of the month Av)

Yerushalayim - Jerusalem

Yeshivot - Jewish institutions of higher learning, Talmudic academies

Yosef - the biblical figure Joseph, son of Jacob

