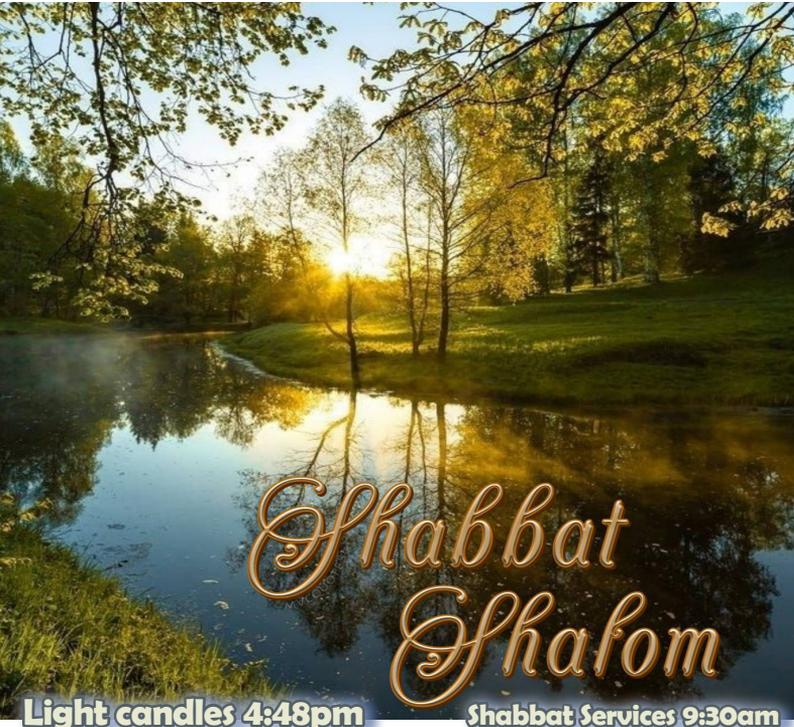




# Carnegie Shul Chatter

## November 10, 2022



## Shabbat Services

The Carnegie Shul continues to offer hybrid Shabbat services. Please join us in the sanctuary, providing you have been vaccinated for Covid 19. Masks are optional. To attend virtually, watch for a Zoom link in your email. If you don't receive it, contact Rosalyn Hoffman at [rjlynman@yahoo.com](mailto:rjlynman@yahoo.com). The complete Torah reading, in Hebrew and English, can be found on line at [https://www.chabad.org/parshah/torahreading\\_cdo/aid/2492488/jewish/Vayeira-Torah-Reading.htm](https://www.chabad.org/parshah/torahreading_cdo/aid/2492488/jewish/Vayeira-Torah-Reading.htm)

## We Need You

Like many other shuls, the Carnegie Shul turned to Zoom as a way to keep our Shabbos minyans alive during the Covid pandemic. And Zoom served this purpose well. Now, however, with the advent of Covid vaccines and medications, it is much safer to attend services in person, especially at a shul such as ours where we have a small congregation and a large sanctuary that allows for social distancing.

But there is a certain allure to staying at home and Zooming services rather than participating in person. You don't have to get "dressed up" if you are attending via Zoom. If you leave your camera off, no one can see you regardless of what you look like. And you don't have to get up a little earlier and drive to shul. You can just say home and participate from your sofa or favorite easy chair.

But attending by Zoom, now that we can attend in person, is causing some problems. Most

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weeks we have more people attending on Zoom than we have in the building. In fact, even though we have a minyan counting those attending on line, we do not have a minyan in the shul, and we are sometimes hard pressed to have enough in-person attendees to serve as gabbis and to lift and wrap the Torah.

The idea of having a minyan at services is to have Jews coming together to pray together. We need to do this. So please, if you are able, come back to shul. Zoom served its purpose, but now we need you in the building. So please, come to services, enjoy the companionship of your fellow congregants, and have a bite to eat at Kiddush following the services.

We need you.



## Well Deserved Honors

At our High Holiday Services, **Dr. Larry Block** and **Rick D'Loss** were honored with Lifetime Membership Awards in recognition of their many years of dedication and service to the Carnegie Shul.

Larry and Rick each served a quarter of a century, alternately as synagogue president and vice president. Larry has led our services and delivered inspirational D'verei Torah for countless years, while Rick has been our Chief Gabbi and has made certain that our building's maintenance needs have always been met. In more recent years, he did the considerable — and critical — work of facilitating our congregation's ability to offer services via Zoom.

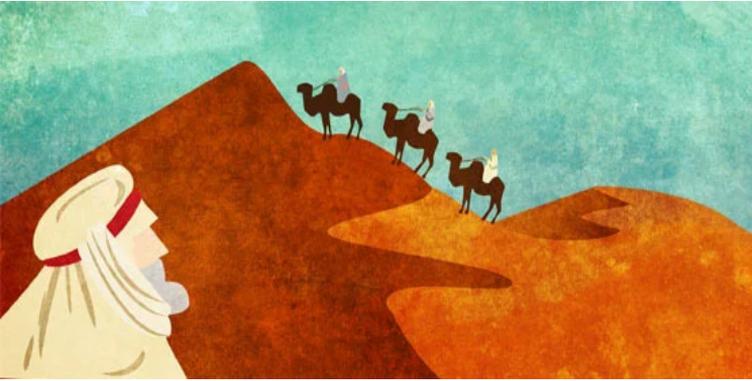
Larry and Rick have been the backbone of our congregation for so long that it is hard to imagine a Carnegie Shul without them. These lifetime memberships and the certificates that accompanied them are just a small token of our congregation's appreciation for all that these outstanding leaders have done for us for so very many years.

The shul's Board of Directors also, at its November meeting, selected **Ellen Roteman** as our 2022 Volunteer of the Year. Ellen was selected in recognition of the incredible work she has done for more than a decade in designing and laying out the Carnegie Shul Chatter that you receive every week. We believe that the artwork, design, and eye-appeal of the Chatter, make our newsletter a cut above other synagogue newsletters and we thank Ellen, our Volunteer of the Year, for her great design work.

# Vayera in a Nutshell

Genesis 18:1–22:24

From Chabad.org



G-d reveals Himself to Abraham three days after the first Jew's circumcision at age ninety-nine; but Abraham rushes off to prepare a meal for three guests who appear in the desert heat. One of the three—who are angels disguised as men—announces that, in exactly one year, the barren Sarah will give birth to a son. Sarah laughs.

Abraham pleads with G-d to spare the wicked city of Sodom. Two of the three disguised angels arrive in the doomed city, where Abraham's nephew Lot extends his hospitality to them and protects them from the evil intentions of a Sodomite mob. The two guests reveal that they have come to overturn the place, and to save Lot and his family. Lot's wife turns into a pillar of salt when she disobeys the command not to look back at the burning city as they flee.

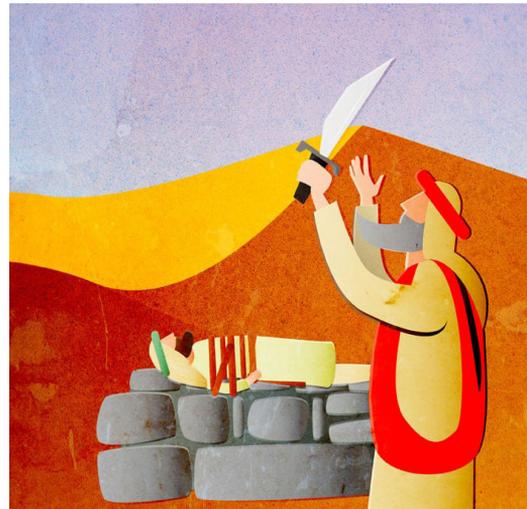
While taking shelter in a cave, Lot's two daughters (believing that they and their father are the only ones left alive in the world) get their father drunk, lie with him and become pregnant. The two sons born from this incident father the nations of Moab and Ammon.

Abraham moves to Gerar, where the Philistine king Abimelech takes Sarah—who is presented as Abraham's sister—to his palace. In a dream, G-d warns Abimelech that he will die unless he returns the woman to her husband. Abraham explains that he feared he would be killed over the beautiful Sarah.

G-d remembers His promise to Sarah, and gives her and Abraham a son, who is named Isaac (Yitzchak, meaning "will laugh"). Isaac is circumcised at the age of eight days; Abraham is one hundred years old, and Sarah ninety, at their child's birth.

Hagar and Ishmael are banished from Abraham's home and wander in the desert; G-d hears the cry of the dying lad, and saves his life by showing his mother a well. Abimelech makes a treaty with Abraham at Beersheba, where Abraham gives him seven sheep as a sign of their truce.

G-d tests Abraham's devotion by commanding him to sacrifice Isaac on Mount Moriah (the Temple Mount) in Jerusalem. Isaac is bound and placed on the altar, and Abraham raises the knife to slaughter his son. A voice from heaven calls to stop him; a ram, caught in the undergrowth by its horns, is offered in Isaac's place.



# Vayeira Haftorah in a Nutshell

**Kings II 4:1-37**

In this week's Torah reading, G-d promises a child to Abraham and Sarah, despite childless Sarah's advanced age. This week's haftorah describes a similar incident that occurred many years later — the prophet Elisha assuring an elderly childless woman that she will bear a child.

The haftorah discusses two miracles performed by the prophet Elisha. The first miracle involved a widow who was heavily in debt, and her creditors

were threatening to take her two sons as slaves to satisfy the debt. When the prophet asked her what she had in her home, the widow responded that she had nothing but a vial of oil. Elisha told her to gather as many empty containers as possible — borrowing from neighbors and friends as well. She should then pour oil from her vial into the empty containers. She did as commanded, and miraculously the oil continued to flow until the last empty jug was filled. The woman sold the oil for a handsome profit, and had enough money to repay her debts and live comfortably.

The second miracle: Elisha would often pass by the city of Shunam, where he would dine and rest at the home of a certain hospitable couple. This couple even made a special addition to their home, a guest room designated for Elisha's use. When the prophet learned that the couple was childless, he blessed the woman that she should give birth to a child in exactly one year's time. And indeed, one year later a son was born to the aged couple.

A few years later the son complained of a headache and died shortly thereafter. The Shunamit woman laid the lifeless body on the bed in Elisha's designated room, and quickly summoned the prophet. Elisha hurried to the woman's home and miraculously brought the boy back to life.



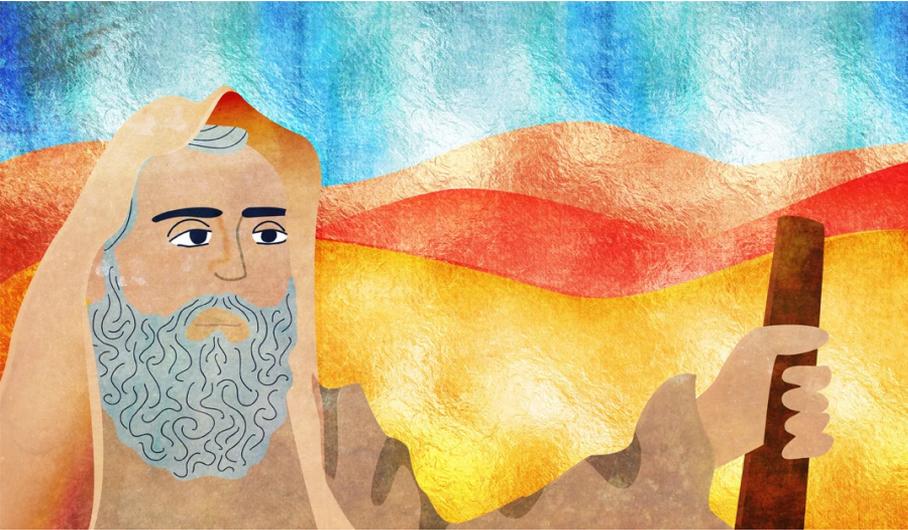
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## Elisha the Prophet

This week's haftarah talks about miracles performed by Elisha the prophet. While many Christians believe that Jesus' resurrection was unique, long before Jesus, Elisha is credited with resurrecting the son of a Shunamit woman. So who was Elisha? Below is what [myjewishlearning.com](http://myjewishlearning.com) has to say about this great prophet.

# Elisha

(c. 9th Century BCE)



We know next to nothing about Elisha's early life until sometime around the year 856 BC, when he was probably in his twenties. He appears to have come from a wealthy land owning family, if the number of oxen they had for ploughing is anything to go by (1 Kings 19:19). When the prophet Elijah arrived suddenly his response to his call

was immediate. Elijah made it clear that it was up to him whether or not he responded to God's call when Elisha asked permission to say farewell to his parents. To demonstrate his determination to follow Elisha dramatically severed his links to his past life by slaughtering the pair of oxen he was ploughing with and cooked their meat over the wood of his plough and gave it to his friends and relatives. Scripture tells us that he then left and became Elijah's attendant or servant in similar way, perhaps, to that in which Joshua had served Moses (cf. Exod. 24:13; 33:11; Num. 11:28).

We hear nothing more of Elisha for at least the next four years, but we can assume that he faithfully served Elijah during that period and learned from him. Knowing that the Lord was about to take him Elijah tested his servant's devotion by asking him three times to remain while he went on in turn to Bethel (2 Kings 2:2), Jericho (2:4) and then over the Jordan (2:6). Elisha and the other prophets of the Lord were well aware of what was about to happen and he refused to leave his master. When they reached the far side of the Jordan Elijah asked him what it was that he wanted and Elisha replied: "...a double-portion of your spirit", indicating that he wished to succeed him in his prophetic office. Given the number of miracles that Elisha performed during his lifetime it is possible that he was also asking for an even greater ministry than Elijah himself had had. Suddenly Elijah was taken away in a whirlwind and Elisha received what he had asked for. Taking up the mantle that he had worn briefly only once before (1 Kings 19:19) he struck the waters of the Jordan and parted them. There the members of the prophetic community met him and despite his objections they insisted on conducting a search for Elijah (2 Kings 2:1-18).

Elisha proved to be of a different character to his former master. Whereas Elijah had been a solitary figure, spending much of his time alone without even a servant (1 Kings 19:3; 2 Kings 1:6) Elisha was often found in the company of the "sons of the prophets" (2 Kings 4:38-41; 6:1-7) and even with the elders of Samaria (6:32). Elisha spent some of his time with the kings of

Israel and on one occasion, the king of Judah as well (3:11). While it was seldom appropriate for Elijah to spend time in the presence of Ahab while he allowed the worship of Ba'al, his son Joram put aside the Canaanite deities and worshipped the Golden Calves that Jeroboam had set up (2 Kings 3:1-3). Though he was far from perfect and at times threatened the prophet's life (6:26-31) at other times he did honour the prophet and referred to him deferentially as "my father" (6:21). In common with Elijah Elisha's ministry took him far and wide, but we know that he had his own house in Samaria (6:32) and the use of an upper room in the town of Shunem (4:8-10) when he was in that region, an arrangement that went on much longer than Elijah's with the widow of Zarahath (1 Kings 17:8-16). The overall impression we get is of a man who is prepared to be involved in society and the everyday details of life (6:1-4). He was even willing to lend his aid in recovering a lost axe head for one of his students (6:5-7), but like his master, would not suffer any insult against his office to go unpunished (2:23-24; cf. 1:9-12).

Two external factors dominated the early years of his ministry: Famine and war. We know that both of these were signs of God's covenantal curses being carried out on a stubborn and disobedient nation (Lev. 26:17-20; Deut. 28:21-25; cf. 1 Kings 8:35, 37; 18:2). Such curses effect both the guilty and the innocent and in many ways Elisha's activities lifted the burden from those who had been faithful to the Lord.



Moab, which had been a vassal of Israel revolted during the reign of Joram and the king set out, accompanied by the king of Judah (Jehoshaphat) and the governor of Edom (cf. 1 Kings 22:47). After seven days the army ran out of water and was in danger of dying of thirst in the desert (2 Kings 4-10). Fortunately and apparently unbeknown to the king of Israel (cf. 2 Kings 3:11) Elisha had accompanied them on their march. He reassured the leaders and ordered the men to dig ditches across the valley. The next morning water filled the ditches and the Moabites, thinking that the sun reflecting on the water was the blood of their enemies descended upon them intent on plunder, but were defeated by the coalition (3:12-25).

The famine is first mentioned in 2 Kings 4:38. Elisha had earlier solved the town of Jericho's problem with its water supply (2:19-22), but twice now he intervened on behalf of the company of the prophets in order to provide them with food. In the first instance one of the company had made the communal meal inedible by adding the gourds from a poisonous plant to the stew. As it appears that the company numbered around a hundred, such an occurrence meant a considerable amount of valuable food was going to be wasted, Elisha therefore performed a miracle and rendered it edible again (4:38-41). In the second incident he miraculously made twenty barley loaves feed a hundred men.....

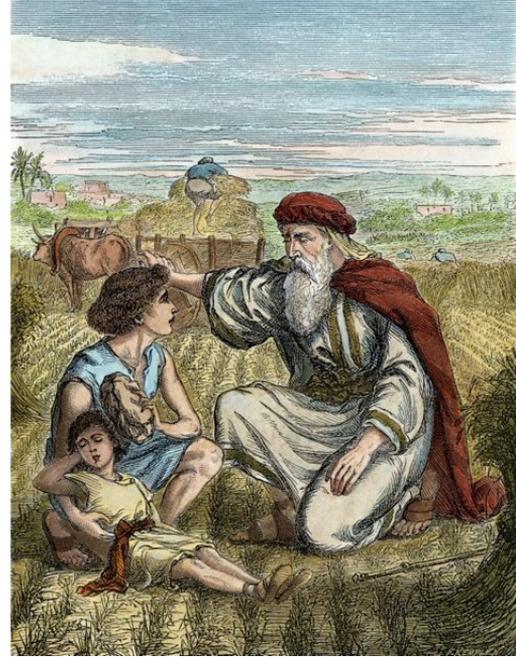
The lot of a widow in the ancient world was difficult at the best of times, how much more

so when the land was in the grip of a drought. The account of Elisha's ministry to the widow in 2 Kings 4 is reminiscent of Elijah's time at Zarephath (1 Kings 17:7-16). This time, however, the widow approaches the prophet and not vice versa and tells him of her misfortune. Her husband had faithfully served the Lord and now he had died, leaving his wife and his children without any means of support. Taking what they had (cf. 1 Kings 17:12; Luke 9:13; John 6:9) Elisha miraculously provided her with the means of survival (2 Kings 4:1-7).

As a reward for providing him with a place to stay when he was in the region Elisha made it possible for her to have a son even though her husband was an old man (2 Kings 4:14). When the child died unexpectedly the woman lost no time in seeking out the prophet on Mt. Carmel, not letting either her husband or Elisha's servant Gehazi delay her in her quest (4:23-26). It is not certain what Elisha intended to achieve by sending Gehazi with his staff. If it was to revive the child (as Gehazi clearly expected), he was unsuccessful (4:30-31). However, in view of the husband's sceptical attitude it may well have been necessary to prevent the child being buried. By placing the symbol of his authority on the child Elisha would have ensured that the body remained untouched until he arrived. The account of the woman does not end with her happy reunion with her son, for we learn later that when the seven year famine was over (8:1; cf. Gen. 41:29) Gehazi introduced her to the king of Israel who restored to her not only all her lands, but also all the income it had earned during her absence restored to her (8:2-6).

The war with Aram continued and Elisha's fame brought about a visit from a very important person. Naaman the Syrian general was used to having people jump to attention when he asked for something. He clearly felt insulted that the prophet would not even see him when he arrived at his house, especially as he had brought enough money to buy the whole of Israel (5:5; cf. 1 Kings 16:24). When Elisha sent a messenger to tell him to wash himself in the Jordan seven times the general went away in a rage, but later, calmed by his servants he did as the prophet had commanded. The next incident was probably one of the saddest moments in the prophet's career. Elisha had refused any reward from Naaman, but being filled with greed his servant Gehazi ran after the departing dignitary and received from him a reward which he then hid. Elisha knew what he had done (an ability that he did not always possess unless the Lord specifically granted it - cf. 4:27). Calling Gehazi to him the prophet rebuked him and from that day Gehazi received the leprosy that had been Naaman's.

Raiding parties from Aram harried the land of Israel, but for some reason these raids were proving fruitless. The reason, the king of Aram was told, was the knowledge that the Lord gave Elisha of his counsels - even what he said in his bed chamber! (6:12). Thinking that he could solve this problem by capturing Elisha he sent an army to Dothan. Needless to say that the arrival of an army was no surprise to Elisha, who was granted spiritual sight to see an even greater force ready to move in his defence (6:18). Just as Elisha opened the eyes of his servant to see spiritual things, he closed the eyes of the Arameans and led them blind into the city of



Samaria (6:18-20). There he refused to allow the king of Israel to harm them and instead made sure that they were fed and released unharmed. The result was more effective than killing the men, for it seems that they realised that further raid would be just as ineffective (6:22-23).

Although Elisha generally enjoyed a better relationship with Israel's Royal family than his former master had done, there was at least one time when his life was directly threatened. When the King of Aram besieged Samaria the situation became so bad that people began to eat their own children in order to survive. When the king of Israel heard this he set out to find Elisha and put him to death, perhaps because the prophet had earlier allowed the Aramean army to go free. Such action proves unnecessary as within 24 hours the siege is lifted and the famine over. The only person who failed to enjoy this reversal was an officer of the king who refused to believe that the Lord could do such a thing (6:24-7:20).

Unlike Elijah, Elisha died a natural death at the end of a long illness that confined him to bed. Such was the power of God that he had enjoyed in his life and ministry that even after his spirit had departed a dead body touching his bones was restored to life (13:14, 20-21).

## Elisha and Israel's Later History

Elisha's ministry played a pivotal role in the history of the Northern Kingdom. During his lifetime Jezebel and the threat of Ba'alism that his master had struggled against was finally dealt with (2 Kings 9:30-10:30), although the people did not abandon the worship of the Golden calves (10:31). It was he who carried out Elijah's command and anointed Hazael king of Aram (1 Kings 19:15; 2 Kings 8:7-15). On his deathbed Elisha prophesied that Jehoash of Israel would defeat Aram only three more times on battle (2 Kings 14-19). Despite a reversal in their fortunes during the reign of Jeroboam II (14:25-27) the Syrians would continue to reduce the size of Israel's territory (8:12-13; 10:32-33; Amos 1:13; Hosea 13:16). In so doing they were carrying out the first instalment of the Lord's judgement on Israel until both nations were swept away by the rising tide of the Assyrian Empire (2 Kings 16:9; 17:5-6; Amos 1:14).

## Elisha as an Example to Christians

Elisha received his call to the Lord's service out of the blue, but his response was immediate and dramatic. He severed his links with his past life, burning his plough and slaughtering his pair of oxen. During his early ministry Jesus Christ seems to have alluded Elisha's call (Luke 9:61-62), stressing that to be one of his disciples required even greater commitment. Nevertheless Elisha remains an outstanding example of humility (3:11), who faithfully served his new master until he departed. He showed his determination to receive what he had been promised by the Lord and would let no one distract him from it (2 Kings 2:1-10). When he came into his own ministry he refused the riches that were offered to him by Naaman the Syrian (5:15-16; 2 Tim. 6:6-10) and he was able to see with spiritual insight that he was not alone in his struggle (6:18). The writer to the Hebrews alludes to his ministry as one of the Old Testament heroes that should inspire us to greater devotion, because the promises that we have received are greater than theirs (Heb. 11:35,39-40).

# Rabbi Schiff Program

For those of you who were unable to attend Rabbi Danny Schiff's recent presentation, Anti-Semitism A-Z, sponsored by the Western Pennsylvania Small Congregations Cohorts program, the presentation is now available for free at <https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/hpXq-WJWo20QuUqidO89DUfajgqjBBdp2As6nVedUwX3i0AxZR3LaAh32FgodPo.5s7t8tG9Zdloeflg>. The passcode is MG3kL#D? Enjoy.

## Updates Needed

### Yahrtzeit Reminder

As a service to our members, the Carnegie Shul sends out Yahrzeit reminders to those who have requested them. From time to time it is necessary for us to update our address list for these reminders. If your address has changed, please let us know by emailing our secretary Rosalyn Hoffman at [rjlynman@yahoo.com](mailto:rjlynman@yahoo.com).

### Mi Shebeirach Prayers

We also say Mi Shebeirach prayers for the sick at our Shabbos services. Our list of those for whom we say these prayers is also in need of updating. Please email Rosalyn and let her know if you have any loved ones on our list who no longer require these prayers. Thank you.

## Yahrtzeits

*This week the Carnegie Shul acknowledges the yahrtzeit of:*

**Hermine Green**

**Jennie Landau**

*May their memories be for a blessing.*

## Donations

### In Honor

**Phillip Harris**

*In Honor of Minnie Harris and Family*

### High Holiday Donations

**Robert And Mary Beth Mandelkorn**

**Michael and Ellen Roteman**