



## Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies

OF AMERICAN JEWISH UNIVERSITY

# Today's Torah

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*Jews have always been a community drawn together by virtue of Torah. No matter where you may be, we welcome you to the Ziegler community through Today's Torah e-mail.*

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**Shabbat Parashat Terumah**  
**February 9, 2019 - 4 Adar I 5779**



**By: Rabbi Adam Greenwald**  
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### Give and Take

Torah Reading: Exodus 25:1 – 27:19  
Haftarah Reading: 1 Kings 5:26 – 6:13

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*I learned this story from Rabbi Ed Feinstein, the greatest of rabbinic storytellers.*

Once upon a time, there lived a wealthy man whose greatest joy was to sleep in synagogue. Each Shabbat he would find a comfortable place on a pew in the back, settle in, and let the songs of thanksgiving and praise that surrounded him lull him into a deep and restful slumber.

On the morning that Parshat Terumah was read from the Torah, he was drifting off just as the *hazzan* chanted the line “And you shall place loaves of bread before me always” (Exodus 25:30). As sometimes happens in those murky moments halfway between sleep and wakefulness, those words entered his ears but seemed to have come to him not from the bimah of the synagogue, but as a heavenly voice in his dreams.

When he later awoke, that command remained clear and distinct in his brain. Was it a

personal message from the Almighty? He needed to find out. After Shabbat ended, he baked two loaves of bread and snuck back into the synagogue with them under cover of darkness. He tucked the two loaves into the Ark – since where else would God look but there – and spirited away.

Moments later, the synagogue's poor janitor entered the sanctuary, to tidy up after the day's worship. A pious man, as he cleaned and straightened up, he spoke aloud to God about his troubles, particularly his difficulty in feeding his large family. When he came to do the final task – dusting off the Ark – he noticed, its door was slightly ajar. Opening it up, he discovered two fresh loaves of bread waiting for him, still warm from the oven! "It's a miracle," he exclaimed. "A miracle from God!" Moreover, he humbly offered a blessing of gratitude – *Baruch ha-tov v'ha'meitiv* -- to the One who is good and does good.

The next morning, the wealthy man awoke with a deep sense of embarrassment. He knew with certainty that he must have dreamt the words about the bread, that he had allowed his imagination to run away with him. He needed to return to the synagogue and recollect the loaves before anyone found them and laughed at his foolishness.

Upon returning to the synagogue early in the morning, and opening the doors to the Ark, he found to his shock and amazement that the loaves were gone! Indeed, he thought to himself, this proved that it could not have been a mere dream. God had wanted his offering of bread and had consumed the loaves as surely as God had accepted the ancient sacrifices that were placed upon the altar. Then and there, the wealthy man committed to bringing another offering of bread just as soon as he could.

On and on the pattern went, for weeks, months, maybe years. Each morning the rich man secretly placed bread in the Ark. The poor man opened each night and fed his family. Each believed they were party to a miracle. In addition, the truth is, they were – just maybe not the kind that they had thought.

Parshat Terumah begins with the command to all people to open their hearts and give what they can for the building of holy space where God can dwell. Generous giving and grateful receiving are essential parts of the sacred script of how we manifest God's presence among us. As we give and take, as we share and support, we sanctify our world and become God's agents in blessing one another.

Shabbat Shalom

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**Rabbi Adam Greenwald**, is the Executive Director of the Louis & Judith Miller Introduction to Judaism Program at American Jewish University. Before coming to AJU, he served as Revson Rabbinic Fellow at IKAR, a Los Angeles congregation often recognized as one of the nation's most creative and fastest-growing spiritual communities. Prior to ordination, he served two years as Rabbinic Intern at Congregation B'nai Israel in Tustin, CA and as Director of Education of the PANIM Institute's IMPACT: DC program. Rabbi Greenwald was ordained at the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies in 2011.



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