

## Farewell to Taraval

Remarks – Shabbat Morning

May 20<sup>TH</sup>, 2023 – Shabbat Bemidbar

This morning I arrived early at Taraval for Torah study. Before going in, I took a moment, imagining that day back in 1976, when a large group of Jewish people crossed Taraval Street, carrying several Torah scrolls and moving into a new home.

I wondered aloud, “What would Father Segismundo Taraval, the 18<sup>th</sup>-Century missionary, -- what would he have made of so much Jewish activity on a street bearing his name...

“It was Sunday, March 28<sup>th</sup> 1976,” said a voice. Bewildered, I glanced behind me. “It’s me,” said the voice. “It’s me, the *building.*”

The building kept talking, “Under the leadership of Rabbi Ted Alexander and presidents Gunter Ullman and Gary Neumann, the members of CBE walked the sifrei torah across the street and placed them in their new home right here. The exponential growth in membership necessitated the move. (It was the 26<sup>th</sup> day of the month of Adar II and the Torah portion was Tazria.)

“All the big machers were here, but so were the regular families: the zaydes and the bubbes, the parents with babies in their arms; little kids laughing and scampering about, the brooding teens with their scandalously long hair, sandals, and bellbottom jeans. They brought those Torah scrolls inside and placed them right into the ark.”

I thought I am old enough to remember 1976, America's Bicentennial Year. Who here was around back then, when:

- George Moscone was San Francisco's mayor; and Jerry Brown was California's governor; John Tunney and Alan Cranston were our senators; and *Gerald Ford* was president!
- Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak founded Apple that year;
- The Dow Jones high was 1004;
- Back then, a congregant family might make their way to shul in their new Oldsmobile Cutlass Supreme – America's best-selling car that year at a cool \$5k. That 22-gallon tank would last all week when gasoline was at 59 cents a gallon;
- In 1976, the average family income was \$16,000; and the average home was around \$63,000;
- Even here in SF, the average home cost \$80,000 and the typical SF homebuyer was between 25 and 34 years old.
- In 1976 Yitzchak Rabin was prime minister and Ephraim Katzir was president; Miss Israel won the Miss Universe contest; and
- Israeli commandos raided Entebbe airport in Uganda to free hostages taken by terrorists who hijacked an Air France Airbus. Some of us remember that harrowing event – others have seen the movie.

“Rabbi Alan,” said the building pensively, “Forty-seven years ago, when Congregation B’nai Emunah moved in, I knew this day would come. The day of the final Shabbat service. After all, the Shalimar Night Club came and went and the Sand Dunes Bar came and went. I knew one day B’nai Emunah would move on. It is the way of things.”

“We had a good run, CBE and I,” said the building. “I remember the rabbis, the cantors, the presidents, the members, and the children. CBE grew and contracted, became big and then became small – things were getting scary for the leaders. But this congregation chose the path of courage over the path of the fear, the path of risk over the path of stagnation. The members of this synagogue and the members of Beth Israel Judea agreed to go into the future together with a new name and a new purpose – Am Tikvah – the people of hope.”

I asked the building, “Aren’t you sorry to see the people go?”

The building answered, “Yes, of course, but mostly I am proud of them. Proud of the new congregation they are creating; Proud of how intentionally they are re-inventing themselves; proud that they have engaged an extraordinary new rabbi. Proud of the amazing future that lies ahead of them.”

“As for me,” continued the building, “I will be fine. This is the way of buildings. Bought and sold, sold and bought. Soon new people will move in and we will be happy together. But for you, Am Tikvah – make new memories, sing new songs, tell new stories, learn more Torah, worship with intention, and love one another.”

With that, the building fell silent.

Shabbat shalom