

Good Shabbos Everyone. The Torah tells us this week "You shall perform My statutes, keep My ordinances and perform them then you will live on the land securely." (Vayikra 25:18) We see here that the Torah promises us security if the Jewish people keep the Torah. The following story is one of the most amazing stories we have ever printed. This story demonstrates how Hashem is with those who keep His Torah.

Avrohom Walters hoped to ease his family's transition into their new life. An experienced education professional, Avrohom had accepted a prestigious position with the US State Department. The year was 1973, and Avrohom was sent with his family to his first assignment in Jerusalem. Avrohom's work involved supervising the distribution of American aid money to foreign institutions in the Middle East where American students learned.

Soon the neighbors came by, greeting the new family and offering their help. The conversation naturally turned to questions about what had brought the Walters family to Eretz Yisroel. But their curiosity had to remain unsatisfied. Avrohom's job for the State Department was considered a top-secret position. After all, he had been entrusted with 880 million dollars worth of funding—and nobody wanted news like that to leak out! So whenever the topic came up, Avrohom adroitly changed the subject. Even his wife and children had only a vague idea of what he was doing in the Holy Land.

The State Department had assigned John Williams, as Avrohom's liaison in the Middle East. It was up to John to do all the legwork—working out the schedule, arranging the transportation, and making the calls to smooth the way for Avrohom's research into the various schools in the region.

One day, Avrohom had reason to go to Netivot. Avrohom remarked to his non-Jewish American State Department co-worker John, that he wished to see the great Rabbi the Baba Sali while they were in Netivot. After the pair arrived in Netivot, John busied himself with fixing the car which had broken down, and Avrohom took the opportunity to go to the home of the great sage Rav Yisrael Abuchatzteira, zt"l (1890-1984), affectionately known as the Baba Sali.

Avrohom stepped into a hallway at the Baba Sali's home. It was filled with people, all there for the same purpose. He glanced around the room, trying to calculate how long it would take for his turn to arrive. Resigned to a long wait, Avrohom leaned back against the wall.

Just then, a man opened an inner door and stepped into the hallway. "Is there anyone here named Avrohom?" he called. Avrohom knew the man wasn't referring to him. He had just come and signed- in a few minutes ago—it couldn't possibly be his turn yet! When no one responded after several minutes, the man called again. "Is there anyone here named Avrohom?"

Feeling somewhat sheepish, Avrohom stepped forward. "My name is Avrohom." "Come with me, please." Avrohom followed the man into a room. There was Rav Abuchatzteira, sitting near a table. The man motioned Avrohom to a seat right next to the great sage. "Please, make yourself comfortable," Rav Abuchatzteira said warmly. "Have something to drink!" Avrohom sat there awkwardly. What he really wanted was a blessing. But he couldn't ask for anything until Rav Abuchatzteira explained why he had called him into the room, ahead of all the others who were waiting their turn.

A humming sound in the distance abruptly became a deafening beat. Avrohom listened in puzzlement, then realized that a helicopter must be landing nearby. The whirling rotor blades generated enough noise to make conversation all but impossible. The sound diminished slightly.

The door opened—and in walked Rav Ovadiah Yosef - one of the leading Sefardic Rabbis in the Jewish world. Avrohom stared as the two greeted one another and began talking in rapid Arabic. Most of the conversation was indecipherable to him, but he did manage to make out one word—Suriya, which means Syria.

Rav Ovadiah Yosef suddenly turned to Avrohom. Speaking now in Hebrew, he said "Rabbeinu [Rav Yisrael Abuchatzteira] says there is a lady named Daadba who escaped from Syria, but her husband never made it out. Right now she is an *agunah*, (a woman who doesn't know if her husband is dead or alive, and is therefore forbidden to remarry.) If you ever go to Syria, please try to find out what happened to him."

Avrohom couldn't believe what he was hearing. Neither rav had any idea who he was! Certainly they did not know why he was in Israel—that information had been kept completely secret. Why would they even imagine that he would be going to Syria? And how had they known that he would be coming to see them that day?

Gathering his wits together, Avrohom managed to give Rav Ovadiah Yosef his private number. He took leave of the two rabbanim after receiving Rav Abuchatzteira's good wishes and blessing. Less than an hour had passed since Avrohom had set out on his visit.

Stepping out of his taxi in front of the auto mechanic, Avrohom was surprised to see John driving their car out of the garage. John noticed that Avrohom was noticeably shaken by his encounter with the Baba Sali. But, for obvious reasons, Avrohom did not tell John about the conversation.

To Avrohom's surprise, John picked him up the next day and announced that the day's plans included flying via Cyprus to Syria! (Where the Americans had supported schools at the time.) Avrohom was shocked. Soon after, they were on a helicopter on their way to Syria, when the helicopter began to experience problems. The pilot told the passengers to hold tight, as they would need to make an emergency landing... *to be continued.* **Good Shabbos Everyone.**