



## **Parashat Shoftim** **2 Elul 5783 – August 19, 2023**

While B'nei Yisrael was mourning for Moses, tradition teaches that 3,000 rulings of halachah (Jewish law) were lost or forgotten. When the people approached Joshua for rulings and discovered that they were not available (forgotten) they were ready to stone him to death. Calev intervened and promised he would give his daughter Achsah as a wife to the man who could reconstruct these halachik rulings, for that man would be a true scholar and devout in his faith. Othniel is the man Achsah marries.

The first judge after Joshua's death was Othniel. He was able to reconstruct the halachot (the laws). The confusion comes from the question of why Joshua didn't ask G-d to enlighten him with the forgotten halachot (laws).

The reason is that a prophet does not have the right to innovate a halachik ruling which had not been known previously, only in an emergency situation. This was a way to minimize false prophets' claim to have had communication from G-d in which they were taught a "new Torah." The only person who was granted such repeated instruction was Moses.

It is in this parashah where the words; "ki yipale davar mimcha..." "for the matter is too wondrous for you..." comes from Moses. He is saying that "when certain halachik rulings are beyond you, you will have to ask competent halachik authorities, not from prophets or those who believe they are." Halachik rulings can only be derived by traditional methods of Torah study.

Shabbat Shalom!

Good Shabbos!

Rabbi Nathan W. Langer