

The חזקוני, who was a ראשון, in fact, he is one of the major מפרשים on רש"י, brings an interesting מדרש. Why do we have שמיני עצרת? He brings a משל to a מלך whose children came to visit him from time to time. The first group of children came to visit him and he said to them, "When are you going to be back? They replied, "In fifty days." He said, "Have a nice day, see you then." The second group of kids came to him and spent time with him. When they were ready to leave, he asked them "When are you coming back?" They said in four months. He said, "Have a nice day, see you then."

The third group of children came to him and he said, "When will you be back?" They said "We're very busy; we won't be able to come back for another seven months." He said, "Do me a favor and stick around for one more day. It's going to be such a long time until I see you again."

This is only עצרת when it comes. Why? After פסח, we don't need עצרת. We're coming back for שבועות in fifty days. And שבועות is only four months until סוכות. But after סוכות, we can't go back because it's the rainy season, because of the גשמים, we would like to come back but we can't. Therefore Hashem says, "Please wait another day and stay with me."

I thought that was very lovely. It's a very nice way of showing the חיבה Hashem has for us, and we should reciprocate and have the חיבה back.

