

**JUST ONE MORE DAY!**  
**Shmini Atzeret 5779**  
**October 1, 2018**  
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Today is Shmini Atzeret, the holiday that closes off the holiday of Sukkot. In the Bible, Sukkot is a seven day holiday. The first day is a holy day, and the remainder are “weekdays” on which we still go into the sukkah, and we still wave the lulav and etrog, but we don’t refrain from work, and so we don’t consider them as holy or as special as the first day.

But then, before concluding the holiday season, we have **one final holy day**, namely, today: **Shmini Atzeret**. In Israel, this holiday lasts one day. Here—in fact, *everywhere* outside of Israel—it lasts two days.

We might ask the question, “Why?” Why do we need a closing-off day like Shmini Atzeret to mark the conclusion of the festival?

This question is asked in the midrashic collection called P’sikta de Rav Kahana. The midrash notes that the root of the word *atzeret* is the verb, *la’a’tzor*, which means “to stop”. And then the question is answered with a parable:

The situation is compared to that of a king whose children came to visit him in his palace. They stay for a week. They have a wonderful time celebrating with him. We can imagine them taking walks together and taking in the marvelous fruits and foliage of the palace. But then, as they are about to leave to go home, the king says to them, “*Atzor!*”—“Stop! Won’t you please stay with me for just *one more day?*”

We can understand this, can’t we? We’re about to recite *yizkor* prayers. It’s natural for us to long for our loved ones who’ve predeceased us, and wish that we had just a little more time to spend with them before their passing. As a friend and colleague of mine, Rabbi Arthur Lavinsky puts it, “When you love someone, you never have enough time with them.”

Perhaps, just as the king in that midrash wished that he had more time with his loved ones, we’re feeling the same way.



This teaching reminds us to make the most of our time with those we care about. We never know how long we will enjoy good health or how long we'll survive. And we certainly don't know how long our friends and relatives will live. Let's live our lives in such a way that we cherish every day and embrace the people whom we love.

Rabbi Lavinsky brought to my attention a poem, entitled, "ONE MORE DAY" by Zayne Collie. I'd like to share a portion of it with you at this time:

I feel I should have listened closer  
To what you had to say.  
I promise to you that I would,  
*If I could have just one more day.*

Time seemed to move so slowly  
It felt like I was wishing it away.  
Time would not be wasted.  
*If I could have one more day.*

Since you have gone  
Life has changed in many ways.  
Happiness and joy that I would share with you  
*If I had just one more day.*

One more hug, one more kiss  
One more smile, and a laugh.  
Treasures I would hold so true  
*If I could have just one more day.*

All of the sadness and the grief,  
Has taught me to savor every minute,  
To keep myself from asking:  
*If I could have just one more day.*

Let me wish us all a *Hag Sameach*.  
Let's make today—and every day—count.  
Let's open up our Yizkor books at this time.