

# You've goat male!

## Study sheet for Sukkot

### SUKKOT OFFERINGS

Derived from Numbers 29:12-34<sup>a</sup>

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
13 bulls	12 bulls	11 bulls	10 bulls	9 bulls	8 bulls	7 bulls
2 rams	2 rams	2 rams	2 rams	2 rams	2 rams	2 rams
14 lambs	14 lambs	14 lambs	14 lambs	14 lambs	14 lambs	14 lambs
1 male goat	1 male goat	1 he-goat	1 male goat	1 he-goat	1 he-goat	1 he-goat

### PARTICULARISM AND UNIVERSALISM

*Pesikta Rabbati 28*

Rabbi Pinchas ben-Chama said: "The 70 bulls that the Israelites sacrificed at Sukkot denote the 70 nations of the world – as a prayer that they will live in prosperity."<sup>b</sup>

א"ר פינחס בן חמ' שבעים פרים היו שהיו ישר'  
מקריבין בחג כנגד שבעים אומות העולם שישבו  
בשלווה.

<sup>a</sup> Table simplified from one compiled by Noga Ayali-Darshan, "The seventy bulls sacrificed at Sukkot (Num 29:12-34) in light of a ritual text from Emar", *Vetus Testamentum* 65 (2015), 9-19: 10 fn 1.

<sup>b</sup> A parallel text, Lamentations Rabbah 1:23, records that the purpose of the sacrifice on behalf of other nations is שלא יצדה העולם מהם, 'in order that the world not be depopulated of them'. See also Numbers Rabbah 21:24, which records the Israelites saying: היו צריכין לאהוב אותנו והם שונאין אותנו, 'They should love us for this, but in fact they hate us!'

## TWO SORTS OF GOAT?

### *Oznayim la-Torah to Numbers 29:22*

On the 1st, 2nd and 4th days of Sukkot, it says “a male goat”, and on the 3rd, 5th, 6th and 7th days it says “a he-goat”. This is curious, is it not? I read in the name of the Vilna Ga’on<sup>c</sup> that for the kabbalists there were only two nations<sup>d</sup> – Yishma’el and Esau – and the remaining nations are all subordinate to them.<sup>e</sup> It is also known that Yishma’el also went by the name “male goat”, and Esau by “he-goat”.<sup>f</sup> Thus we sacrifice 35 bulls for the sake of those nations that are subordinate to Yishma’el, and 35 for those that are subordinate to Esau. We begin with Yishma’el because he preceded Esau.

This kabbalah is like an open book to us, these days, for the whole world is divided into two ‘worlds’: the eastern bloc and the western bloc. At the head of each stands a hegemonic power, and the remaining nations are subordinate to one or the other (or are subordinated to a subordinate nation) and are dragged after whichever one guarantees them bread and water. And we learn something very significant from the Torah’s hints here: to remain neutral in the war between these mighty powers, between ‘Yishma’el’ and ‘Esau’. It is not for us to intervene in this great conflict, or to tip the balance in favour of one side or the other. Rather, we sacrifice 35 bulls for one bloc, and exactly the same number for the second bloc. As Balaam prophesied about us: “They are a people who dwell alone, and they are not among the nations.”<sup>g</sup>

ביום א', ב' וד' דסוכות נאמר „ושעיר עזים”,  
וביום ג', ה', ו' וז' דסוכות נאמר „ושעיר”, הלא  
דבר הוא? וראיתי בשם הגר”א, שלדברי  
המקובלים ישנן רק ב' אומות: ישמעאל ועשו,  
ושאר האומות יונקות מהן. הנה ידוע,  
שישמעאל נקרא „שעיר עזים” ועשו „שעיר”,  
ועלינו להקריב ל”ה פרים בעד האומות היונקות  
מישמעאל, ול”ה – מעשו. ומתחילים מישמעאל,  
שקדם לעשוי...וקבלה זו היא כספר הגלוי  
לפנינו בימינו אלה, שכל העולם מחולק לב'  
עולמות, ל”מזרח” ו”מערב” ובראש כ”א מהם  
עומדת אומה אדירה ידועה, ושאר האומות...  
„יונקות” מזו או מזו (ויש שיונקות... מזו ומזו)  
ונגזרות אחרי נותנת לחמן... ושקוין. ודבר גדול  
אנו למדים מרמזי תוה”ק לשמור על קן נטרלי  
בין מלחמת איתנים אלה, בין „ישמעאל” לבין  
„עשו”... אין לנו להתערב במלחמת הגדולים  
ולהכריע את הכף לצד זה או זה, אלא להקריב  
ל”ה פרים בעד גוש זה ובדיוק כמספר הזה בעד  
הגוש השני. ועלינו ניבא בלעם: „הן עם לבדד  
ישכן ובגוים לא יתחשב”.

<sup>c</sup> Kol Eliyahu 20a

<sup>d</sup> Nitzutzei Orot to Zohar 3:227b.

<sup>e</sup> Literally, ‘suckle from them’

<sup>f</sup> Esau’s nickname is presumably a pun on his being an איש שעיר, a hairy man (Genesis 27:11): the Hebrew words for ‘he-goat’ and ‘hairy’ come from the same root. Yishma’el’s nickname is obscure but could be a reference to the Yom Kippur ritual where one goat is sacrificed and one sent into the wilderness: it is often observed that this is what Abraham did, or almost did, with his two sons – see eg Mary Douglas, *Jacob’s Tears: the priestly work of reconciliation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004): 56.

<sup>g</sup> Numbers 23:9