

Num. 29:12

On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, you shall observe a sacred occasion: you shall not work at your occupations.—Seven days you shall observe a festival of the Lord.— 13 You shall present a burnt offering, an offering by fire of pleasing odor to the Lord: Thirteen bulls of the herd, two rams, fourteen yearling lambs; they shall be without blemish. 14 The meal offerings with them—of choice flour with oil mixed in—shall be: three-tenths of a measure for each of the thirteen bulls, two-tenths for each of the two rams, 15 and one-tenth for each of the fourteen lambs. 16 And there shall be one goat for a sin offering—in addition to the regular burnt offering, its meal offering and libation.

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
Sukkot (Num 29:12-34)	13 bulls 2 rams 14 lambs 1 goat	12 bulls 2 rams 14 lambs 1 goat	11 bulls 2 rams 14 lambs 1 goat	10 bulls 2 rams 14 lambs 1 goat	9 bulls 2 rams 14 lambs 1 goat	8 bulls 2 rams 14 lambs 1 goat	7 bulls 2 rams 14 lambs 1 goat
Passover (Num 28:16-25)	2 bulls 1 ram 7 lambs 1 goat	2 bulls 1 ram 7 lambs 1 goat	2 bulls 1 ram 7 lambs 1 goat	2 bulls 1 ram 7 lambs 1 goat			

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RASHI: The meal offerings and libations for the bulls. A total of 70 bulls are offered on this festival, corresponding to the 70 nations. That is why their number goes down each day—it symbolizes the destruction of the nations. In temple times, though, offering these 70 bulls served to protect the 70 nations. **Lambs.** These correspond to Israel: “Israel are scattered sheep” (Jer. 50:17). Notice that the same number of lambs, 14, is offered every day, amounting to a total of 98. The total of 98 sheep corresponds to the 98 curses in Deuteronomy 28.

HIZKUNI: The total of 70 bulls offered on this festival corresponds to the total of 52 sabbaths, 7 days of Passover, 1 of the Feast of Weeks, 1 of the New Year, 1 of the Day of Atonement, and the 8 days of the Feast of Booths.

ABARBANEL: The 70 bulls represent the 70 years of life. But note further that a total of 28 animals is offered every day, making four sevens, representing the seventh-day Sabbath, the festivals of the seventh month, the seventh-year sabbatical, and the jubilee year that follows seven sabbatical cycles

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Why Seventy Bulls?

The Number Seven – George Gray and Christophe Nihan contend that it reflects the significance of the number seven: seventy bulls are offered on the seven days of the festival, which is celebrated during the seventh month. This explanation, however, fits the law as described in Ezekiel, which commands the sacrifice of seven bulls each day of the spring and autumnal festivals, but does not fit the decreasing number of bulls each day (13, 12, 11, etc.).

Needed for Rain – Jacob Licht [points to] Mal 3:10, which intimates that great numbers of tithes are necessary to induce God to give rain. Nevertheless, the verse in Malachi refers neither to burnt offerings nor the number seventy.

Seventy Nations – Jacob Milgrom turns to the midrashic tradition (*b. Sukkah* 55b), relating the seventy bulls to the seventy nations of the world who appeal for a good harvest.

The Sacrifices of the *Zukru*-festival*

Over the course of the seven days of the festival, numerous offerings—more than any other documented festivals—were given to all the gods, attesting to the significance of this feast in the city’s religious calendar. The first offerings of the *zukru*-festival were sacrificed a day before, on the fourteenth of the month of “the head of the year”, as is documented (ll. 36-38):

On the month of “head of the year”, on the fourteenth day, they offer seventy pure lambs provided by the king ... for all the seventy gods [of the city of] Emar.

The seventy lambs are clearly said to be sacrificed to each of the seventy gods of Emar, yet we know from the following lines of the tablet (76-162) that there were much more than seventy gods at Emar. That the number seventy is not an error is clear from another Emarite cultic text (*Emar* 6, 463:6) that orders seventy doves to be distributed between the gods. It seems, therefore, that the reference to the number seventy reflects the idealized expression “seventy gods” prevalent in West Semitic literature, rather than the accurate number of the Emarite gods. This suggestion is confirmed by the following occurrences:

- In Ugaritic literature the expression “seventy children of Aṭirat” (the Ugarit name for the goddess Asherah) signifies all the gods who were born to El and Aṭirat, the ancestors of the gods.
- In a Hurro-Hittite work (the *Song of Ullikummi*) that contains typical West-Semitic motifs, the same expression, “seventy gods” occurs in parallel with “all the gods”.
- In another Emarite text which deals with the *kissu*-festival (*Emar* 6, 385:34), seventy portions of bread and meat are ordered to be set “before them”—presumably the same seventy gods.

***In Emar, located on the wide bend of the Euphrates River in north-eastern modern Syria.**