

Why so much sacrifice in the Old Testament?

(Notes from Brant Pitre speech on Romans ch. 12. <https://stpaulcenter.com/bible-studies/audio-studies>)

Sacrifice was ritualized self-offering.

- 1) The animal represented the offeror. A symbolic self-offering to God.
- 2) Jewish sacrifices had a typological, prophetic element. It points to a future reality that would foreshadow a blessing that has yet to appear. A future reality is being pointed to and prepared by the sacrifices of the Old Testament.

"I have come not to abolish the law but to fulfill."

These were the effects the sacrifices would have.

- a) Substitution/representation
- b) Mediation- a link of communion with God. Where heaven and earth would meet. The priest would intercede to God on behalf of the person.
- c) Sacrifices had a symbolism of divinization- a participation in divine nature.
 - a. Shown by the burning of the sacrifices. The offering is consumed by fire and ascends to God.
 - b. "the consecration of sacrificial victim was completed by burning: this is what changed the sacrifice from an oblation into something possessed by God."
 - i. The sacrifice was not destroyed. The burning was the sanctifying and divinization.
 - c. A sacrifice was both a transfer, and a transformation.
 - i. *When Solomon had ended his prayer, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offerings and the sacrifices, and the glory of the LORD filled the house. (2 Chronicles 7:1)*
- d) Animals that were sacrificed: Oxen, sheep, goats, turtledoves, and pigeons.
 - a. The lay person would lay hands on the animal.
 - i. Setting the animal apart for death, and also to identify himself with the animal.
 - ii. The person would confess their sins at this time to the priest.
 - iii. The lay person would slit the throat of the animal as the animal was brought near the altar. Then they would cut up the animal.
 1. the priest would catch the blood
 2. and pour out the blood on the altar
 3. The priest would lay wood on the altar and light the altar on fire
 4. Finally the priest would bring the cut up parts of the animal to the altar to be burned.

- e) Not every sacrifice had the same meaning. There were distinct offerings for distinct circumstances- Described in Leviticus.
 - a. Three different sacrifices to express communion and right relation to God.
 - i. The whole burnt-offering. *Holocaust*. The entire animal is burnt up to represent a total self-offering to God with nothing remaining.
 - ii. The bread offering. (Typically offered with wine)
 - 1. Gift of thanksgiving to God.
 - 2. Used when priests are ordained (Old Testament).
 - 3. Bread and wine are offered in thanksgiving.
 - iii. The piece offering.
 - b. Secondary sacrifices were needed to restore union with God. So if the person was not fit to offer sacrifice, sacrifices would be offered firstly so that they could be united back to God to offer the primary sacrifices of offering oneself to God and thanking Him.
- f) The meaning of the laying on of hands is to set apart for death/sacrifice.
 - a. As Catholics, we receive the laying on of hands at Confirmation, The Ordination of Priests and Deacons, and the Anointing of the Sick.
 - i. It is not only a symbol of setting someone apart from the rest. It is an image of doing this for the sake of death/sacrifice.
 - b. Leviticus 24-
 - i. *Take the blasphemer outside the camp, and when all who heard him have laid their hands on his head, let the whole community stone him.*