

What does Gen 9.4 mean when it says, “You must not eat any meat that still has blood in it.”

Several places in the Old Testament prohibit God’s people from eating blood. To this day “kosher” laws maintain that prohibition which is why meat that is sold for “observant” Jews to keep kosher laws has to be certified by a rabbi as having been slaughtered so that the blood is properly drained.

See also Leviticus 3.17; 7.22, 26 and 27.

Lev. 7.27: Anyone who eats blood must be cut off from their people.

In Leviticus 17.14 gives God’s reason: the life of every creature is its blood. The Bible makes a big deal about the sacredness of life. A line is drawn between the eating of a slaughtered animal and feasting on its blood.

Lev 17.14: ... because the life of every creature is its blood. That is why I have said to the Israelites, “You must not eat the blood of any creature, because the life of every creature is its blood; anyone who eats it must be cut off.”

Maybe this is because of the principle of substitution, which allows an animal to substitute for the life of a human which is owed to God because of sin. In the Garden of Eden God warns Adam and Eve that in the day they eat of the forbidden fruit, they shall surely die. Actually that day, while death was not immediate, it became inevitable. But instead of killing them immediately, God substitutes the animals for their lives and clothes the shame of Adam and Eve with their skins. Genesis 3.21.

The New Testament pronounces what the Old Testament illustrates: Hebrews 9.22 In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. In the OT, animal sacrifices were required for the sin offering. In the NT the Bible says, the blood of Jesus cleanses us from sin. 1 John 1.7 and Ephesians 2.13 among other places.