

**Sin is Iniquity (Hebrew: *âvôn*, Greek: *adikia*)**  
**A Series on the Meaning of Sin: Part 5**

Throughout the Old Testament, one of the principle Hebrew terms for sin is 'âvôn. The word picture that this Hebrew masculine noun is based on is something twisted.

**'Âvôn** (Strong's #H5771)

This Hebrew noun means "iniquity, perversity, or depravity" within a moral context. It is used to describe someone with a twisted moral character. The use of 'âvôn also associates the consequence of this twisted nature; the idea of punishment is included with 'âvôn.

'Âvôn captures the personal (as well as corporate) nature of sin and the cause of one's destruction.

Cain said to the Lord, "My punishment ('**âvôn**) is too great to bear!" (Gen 4:13)

Then in the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity ('**âvôn**) of the Amorite is not yet complete. (Gen 15:16)

You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity ('**âvôn**) of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. (Ex 20:4-6)

Now David's heart troubled him after he had numbered the people. So David said to the Lord, "I have sinned greatly in what I have done. But now, O Lord, please take away the iniquity ('**âvôn**) of Your servant, for I have acted very foolishly." (2 Sam 24:10)

But He was pierced through for our transgressions,  
He was crushed for our iniquities ('**âvôn**);  
The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him,  
And by His scourging we are healed.  
All of us like sheep have gone astray,  
Each of us has turned to his own way;  
But the Lord has caused the iniquity ('**âvôn**) of us all  
To fall on Him. (Isa 53:5-6)

I will cleanse them from all their iniquity ('**âvôn**) by which they have sinned against Me, and I will pardon all their iniquities ('**âvôn**) by which they have sinned against Me and by which they have transgressed against Me. (Jer 33:8)

Found often in extrabiblical Greek literature is the Greek verb **adikēō** (Strong's #G91), which means "to be unjust, to act morally wrong, to hurt or offend."

**Adikia** (Strong's #G93)

The Greek noun for adikēō is adikia, whose meaning places an emphasis on injustice. Of the Septuagint (LXX), adikia is the most common Greek noun used to translate '**âvôn** to mean "offense, guilt, or punishment." Like its Hebrew source 'âvôn, the Greek meaning of adikia places its focus beyond the singular act of sin to include the whole process of sin from commission to consequence. The offense of sin that incurs guilt sets in motion a process of destruction that affects the individual and his community unless the evil of this deed is checked by punishing the offender or atoning for his sin.

Jesus uses adikia with a view of sin that includes punishment.

**Sin is Iniquity (Hebrew: âvôn, Greek: adikia)**  
**A Series on the Meaning of Sin: Part 5 (page 2)**

Once the head of the house gets up and shuts the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock on the door, saying, 'Lord, open up to us!' then He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know where you are from.' Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets'; and He will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you are from; depart from Me, all you evildoers (**adikia**).' (Luke 13:25-27)

So Jesus answered them and said, "My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me. If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself. He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who is seeking the glory of the One who sent Him, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness (**adikia**) in Him. (John 7:16-18)

As a former Pharisee and teacher of the Law, the apostle Paul is unequivocal that *adikia* includes the full scope of sin from commission, divine evaluation of righteousness, to judgment. Furthermore, of all the apostles, he introduces the idea that God plays a role in one's propensity for committing sin, which is understood within the context of God's omniscience of the integrity of one's heart as seen in God's interaction with the non-Believer Abimelech (Gen 20:6). The apostle Peter adds an additional perspective of God's patience "not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (2 Pet 3:9).

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness (**adikia**) of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness (**adikia**), because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. (Rom 1:18-19)

And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, being filled with all unrighteousness (**adikia**), wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them. (Rom 1:28-32)

But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to each person according to his deeds: to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness (**adikia**), wrath and indignation. (Rom 2:5-8)

Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness (**adikia**) for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness (**adikia**). (2 Thess 2:8-12)

Throughout the Bible, the decision to sin is a matter of choice; however, God makes a provision for atonement.

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness (**adikia**); but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. (Rom 6:12-13)

**Sin is Iniquity (Hebrew: âvôn, Greek: adikia)**  
**A Series on the Meaning of Sin: Part 5** (page 3)

And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity (**adikia**); the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell. (Jam 3:6)

“For I will be merciful to their iniquities (**adikia**),  
And I will remember their sins no more.” (Heb 8:12)

References:

1. Brown C, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vols. 2 and 3, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, (1979).