

Sin is a Transgression of God's Law / Moral Standard (Hebrew: pesha', Greek: anōmōs)
A Series on the Meaning of Sin: Part 4

When studying the Bible, it becomes apparent that the Creator of life on earth has jurisdiction and governs by a moral law. Of all of His attributes, God's holiness is singularly repeated and emphasized (Rev 4:8). God Himself is a consecrated Being set apart from sin and anything profane; there is no moral standard or authority outside of or above God. God's word demonstrates that God Himself is the moral standard and authority of moral goodness.

It is in this context that another Hebrew term for sin is about transgression.

Pesha' (Strong's #H6588)

This Hebrew masculine noun means "transgression or rebellion against an individual, nation or God." This term places an emphasis on intent despite one's knowledge of God's standard.

Jewish scholars of the Septuagint translated the Hebrew term pesha' with several Greek terms. Among them was the Greek noun **adikia** (Strong's #G93), which was drawn from the legal world and means "unrighteous, injustice, and unjust deeds."

'Thus you shall say to Joseph, "Please forgive, I beg you, the transgression (H: **pesha'** / G: **adikia**) of your brothers and their sin, for they did you wrong.'" And now, please forgive the transgression (H: **pesha'** / G: **adikia**) of the servants of the God of your father." And Joseph wept when they spoke to him. (Gen 50:17)

Then Joshua said to the people, "You will not be able to serve the Lord, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgression (H: **pesha'** / G: **adikia**) or your sins. If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you after He has done good to you." (Josh 24:19-20)

He shall make atonement for the holy place, because of the impurities of the sons of Israel and because of their transgressions (H: **pesha'** / G: **adikia**) in regard to all their sins; and thus he shall do for the tent of meeting which abides with them in the midst of their impurities. (Lev 16:16)

The Lord is slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, forgiving iniquity and transgression (H: **pesha'** / G: **adikia**); but He will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generations.' (Num 14:18)

When the nation of Israel was incapable of fulfilling their covenant obligations, God promised a New Covenant. Here Jewish scholars translated the Hebrew term pesha' into the Greek noun **anōmia** (Strong's #G458), which means "lawless, transgression, and violation of law." With this view, the nation of Israel's inability is seen as "without law."

But He was pierced through for our transgressions (H: **pesha'** / G: **anōmia**),
He was crushed for our iniquities;
The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him,
And by His scourging we are healed. (Isa 53:5)

By oppression and judgment He was taken away;
And as for His generation, who considered
That He was cut off out of the land of the living
For the transgression (H: **pesha'** / G: **anōmia**) of my people, to whom the stroke was due? (Isa 53:8)

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Of all the gospels, Matthew, who wrote specifically to the Jews, records Jesus' use of the word lawless (anōmia). Jesus indicates that a life that disregards God's moral law extinguishes one's agapē for God and results in the judicial sentence of eternal punishment.

Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness (**anōmia**).' (Matt 7:22-23)

So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness (**anōmia**), and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matt 13:40-42)

Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. Because lawlessness (**anōmia**) is increased, most people's love will grow cold. (Matt 24:11-12)

The apostle Paul, who understands the legal framework of life, places an emphasis on sin as lawless by stating it explicitly, contrasting it with righteousness, and explaining the only judicial remedy for it.

Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness (**anōmia**), or what fellowship has light with darkness? (2 Cor 6:14)

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless (**anōmia**) deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. (Tit 2:11-14)

Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness (**anōmia**); and sin is lawlessness (**anōmia**). (1 John 3:4)

Understanding God's view of sin provides another perspective of God. The legal standard by which righteousness is determined is whether one obeys and follows God's word. This objective standard is outside and with an authority above that of any human government. And as it is embedded in the very nature of God, judgment is not capricious nor whimsical.

References:

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