

Sin

What is sin? We often ask ourselves that very question. And we come up with a myriad of explanations, some valid and some not so valid. It is generally thought of as “missing the mark”. But missing the mark of what? How do we miss the mark that YHWH has set before us? What are the parameters?

We see the definition of sin given in the Brit Chadashah in 1 John 3:4 as...

1Jn 3:4 Everyone practicing sin also practices lawlessness, and sin is the breaking of the Torah.

The KJV and most other translations have this verse as follows:

1Jn 3:4 Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.

What law are we talking about? It is the same word “anomia” - a (without) nomos (law) which in Heb 8:10 is a direct quote from Jer 31:33 where the word “nomos” is “Torah”. So the standard for the definition of sin would be found in the Torah.

There are several words translated “sin” in the Torah. So let's investigate some of these. The word most frequently used is the Hebrew word “Chata” or words with the root “ht” which means to miss something, to fail, an offense or a failure to carry out the obligations of a relationship or agreement with YHWH or man. It was originally thought as a failure to carry out some duty or obligation. It corresponds to our modern concept of an offense rather than sin, which is a theological concept according to the Jewish Encyclopedia on the subject. The party who does not fulfill his obligations in relation to the other is a sinner who fails him.

If a man offends against another man, YHWH will mediate. If a man offends against YHWH, YHWH will again mediate but this time through His son Yahshua HaMashiach. Yahshua is the mediator between us and YHWH.

An example of missing the mark is found in Lev 5:15-16:

***Lev 5:15** If a soul commit a trespass, and sin through ignorance, in the holy things of the LORD; then he shall bring for his trespass unto YHWH a ram without blemish out of the flocks, with thy estimation by shekels of silver, after the shekel of the sanctuary, for a trespass offering: (KJV)*

The first word translated “commit a trespass” is the Hebrew word “ma'al” which means to “deceive or cover up.” Also it indicates being deceptive in kodesh matters. (Ety Dict of Bibl. Hebrew.) The pictographic Hebrew for this word 'ma'al" is (𐤌𐤀𐤁𐤏) and is suggestive of the "leading of an evil spirit" since another meaning of ayin is ghah which means twisted, dark or evil. The 'mem' is spirit and the lamed (shepherds crook) denotes guidance. It basically means to be deceived by an evil spirit to commit sin.

The word translated "sin" is Chata and is the same word used in Gen 13:13 where it says the men of Sodom were sinners (chata) before YHWH. It means immorality in this case. The pictographic ancient Hebrew of the word "chata" is (𐤇𐤇𐤏𐤏) shows a wall surrounding the mighty one. In other words, our sins separate us from YHWH.

The next word is “through ignorance” which is the Hebrew word “shagag” (שגג). The ancient pictographic characters indicate it means a parting of the footsteps, or going astray. The (L) is the foot and the (U) is to part or divide something. It indicates a stumbling.

The next thing to look at in this verse is another word translated “trespass” where it says “he shall bring for his trespass unto YHWH...” This word is different from the first word translated “trespass”. This word is 'asham” which is where we get our English word “ashamed”. It is translated by Strong's concordance as “guilt”. I would therefore translate this verse as:

If a soul be led by an evil spirit and sin through ignorance in the kodesh things of YHWH..., then he shall bring for his 'shame' unto YHWH a ram without spot of blemish from the herd at your evaluation in silver shekels, by the shekel of the sanctuary, for a shame offering."

Therefore, we can conclude that sin (chata) against YHWH was conceived as an offense or a failure to fulfill one's obligations of our covenant with YHWH. It was also translated “bore the loss” in Gen 31:39:

Gen 31:39 That which was torn of beasts I brought not unto thee; I bare the loss (chata) of it; of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day, or stolen by night.

This meant that Jacob “missed” it or suffered the loss instead of seeking compensation for the losses he incurred in their agreement. The contract was compromised by the loss of some of his flock in which he didn't seek redress from Laban.

The penalty for sin is death and the idea of a substitutionary death is a concept from the Torah. Unintentional sins always required the death and shed blood of an unblemished goat, lamb or bull to atone for those sins. There is no sacrifice for intentional sin in the Torah. However, Yahshua had the ability to forgive intentional sin as was done with the woman caught in the act of adultery. Joh 8:11. He forgave her sin and instructed her to go and sin no more.

There are other Hebrew words for sin among which is the word “pesha” (Strong's H6588). The first occurrence of the word 'pesha' is found in Gen 31:36.

Gen 31:36 And Jacob was angry, and he argued with Laban. And Jacob answered and said to Laban, What is my transgression; what is my sin (pesha) that you have hotly pursued me?

The word “pesha” has the basic means of “breach”, such as the breach of a contract, to transgress or to rebel. Other examples of this word are found in 1Kings 12:19 where it says Israel “rebelled” (pesha) against the house of David. And in 2Kings 1:1, where it says Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab. It is translated “rebel” in 2Kings 3:5,7; 8:20,22 and Hos 8:1 where it is “revolted”.

The Hebrew word “avon” basically expresses the idea of crookedness. It is often translated as “Sin” as in Isa 59:2.

*Isa 59:2 But your **iniquities** (avonot) have separated between you and your Elohim, and your **sins** (chata) have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. (KJV)*

In Exo 34:7, we have examples all 3 words used to describe sin.

Exo 34:7 Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving **iniquity** (*avon*) and **transgression** (*pesha*) and **sin** (*chata*), and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity (*avon*) of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation. (KJV)

There are cases where 'avon' is borne by other persons. By priests (Num 18:1) by Aaron (Exo 28:38) by the husband (Num 30:16) by prophet Ezekiel (Eze 4:4-6) by the community (Lev 22:16) by the scapegoat (Lev 16:22) or even by a sacrificial goat (Lev 10:17) (info -from the Jewish Encyclopedia).

The animal was killed and regarded as a substitute for the sinner. The confession of sins was another way of winning forgiveness. In this way, the sinner expelled the sin from his heart. He shows that he does not intend to conceal his sin and to deceive YHWH. (Jewish Encyclopedia)

We see that this all pointed to the substitutionary death of Yahshua for our sins. The Jews fail to see this even though this concept is all throughout the Torah. The confession of our sins to YHWH is a concept found in the Torah and is not just a NT idea.

When YHWH forgives our sins, He casts them away and chooses to not remember them (Isa 64:9; Psa 25:7). They are covered over or hidden (Psa 32:1; 85:2) and borne Himself through the shed blood of His only begotten Son, Yahshua.

In conclusion, sin is the violation of YHWH's commandments and precepts laid down for us in the Torah. The Torah is YHWH's guidebook for us on how to live moral, righteous lives before Him and worship Him alone. The first Commandment is stated:

Deut 6:4 Hear and obey, O Israel, YHWH Elohim, YHWH alone (or only).

Deu 6:5 And you shall love YAHWEH your Elohim with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.

This is repeated by Yahshua in the Brit Chadashah (New Testament).

Mar 12:29 And Yahshua answered him, The first of all the commandments is: "Hear Israel. YAHWEH our Elohim is YAHWEH echad (united).

Mar 12:30 and you shall love YAHWEH your Elohim with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind, and with all your strength." This is the first commandment. (Deut. 6:4, 5)

I'm sure there is a lot more that can be said about sin. Everyone has their own ideas as to what it is and what it isn't. To some it is a sin to skip Church. To others, it is a sin to dance or drink. Others think it is a sin to work on Sundays. Others say it is a sin to work on Saturdays and the Muslims think it is a sin to work on Fridays. Some even consider it a sin to even work at all.

But basically, sin is failure to meet YHWH's standards and miss the mark He sets as a goal for each of us in our lives.

The biggest sin is to worship or have any other mighty ones before His face. All others are HaShatan, the enemy of Elohim. Worship comes from the word "worthship". It is who we pay the most attention or give the most "worth" to in our lives. It can be money, false deities or anything that we place before Him. It is who we obey. But to disobey YHWH is sin.

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