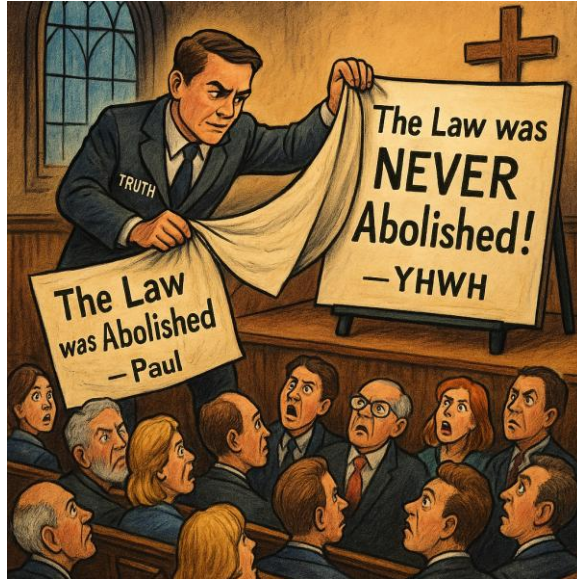


***What Sin Really Is  
Was the Law Really Abolished?***



***Who are You Going to Believe?***

**Written by Rex  
For the Awakening Remnant**

**Walking the Ancient Path of Obedience  
Calling out Deception – Calling out Truth**

**The sum of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous judgments is everlasting. (Tehillim / Psalm 119:160)**

## **What Sin Really Is** *Is All Sin Bad?*

### **Introduction:**

Having explored the concept of sin within Christianity and Judaism, where it is often defined as a transgression against divine law or moral failure, we now turn to a fundamental question: What do the Hebrew Scriptures—the foundation of these faiths—teach about sin? By examining its language, narratives, and laws, we seek to uncover the Bible's portrayal of sin, its origins, its consequences, and the pathways to restoration. This inquiry is essential for understanding how the Hebrew Scriptures uniquely shape the broader theological framework of sin.

### **What the Torah (Law) REALLY Is**

The Torah stands as the ultimate source for wisdom, and understanding the nature, definition, and consequences of sin within the Hebrew Bible. Far more than a collection of laws in the sense of a modern legal system, the Torah is a profound framework for life, woven with divine guidance. Rooted in the Hebrew word “yarah”, which means “to flow as water” or “to point the way,” the term Torah conveys the idea of teaching or instruction rather than merely legislation. It is as a teacher who would stand before his/her students teaching them.

While the English term "law" is often used to translate Torah, this can lead to misunderstandings. Unlike the laws of a country like the United States, which primarily govern civic conduct and impose penalties for violations, the Torah encompasses directives that address the whole of human existence—spiritual, moral, and relational. The Torah of God serves as a guide for aligning human behavior with divine will, pointing individuals toward a life that reflects God's holiness and justice.

Understanding the Torah as Instructions or Directives rather than rigid laws enriches our appreciation of its role in defining sin. It reveals that sin is not simply the breaking of rules but a deviation from the harmonious path God has set for humanity. The Torah instructs individuals and the community to walk in righteousness, providing not only a moral compass but also pathways for repentance and restoration when that path is missed or wandered off of.

By viewing the Torah through this lens, we see how its teachings transcend the boundaries of mere legalism, inviting believers to engage with The Word of God as a living and dynamic source of wisdom and guidance. This foundational understanding sets the stage for a deeper exploration of how sin is defined and addressed in the Hebrew Scriptures. Let's dive in deeper and see what the Torah is not.

### **Why The Torah Is Not Legalism**

#### **Definition of Legalism:**

Legalism is the strict and rigid adherence to rules or laws, often focusing on the external observance of those laws without considering the heart, intent, or purpose behind them. Legalism prioritizes the "letter of the law" over the "spirit of the law," turning guidelines into burdens and missing the deeper relationship they are meant to foster.

### **Why the Torah is Not Legalistic:**

The Torah is not legalistic because it is not a set of rigid rules to follow; it is a guide for living in relationship with God, others, and the world. The purpose of the Torah is to teach, instruct, and direct people toward a life of holiness, love, and justice.

### **Here's why the Torah is not legalistic:**

- **The Heart of the Torah is Relationship:** The Torah is about fostering a deep connection with God. It calls for obedience, not as a checklist of duties, but as an expression of love and devotion. God's commands are meant to shape a holy community, reflecting His character in how people live and treat each other.
- **The Torah Focuses on Intent, Not Just Action:** The Torah is not just concerned with outward actions but also with the inner motivations of the heart. For example, Commandments like "*love your neighbor as yourself*" (Lev. 19:18) emphasize the spirit behind the law—compassion, empathy, and fairness—over mere outward compliance.
- **The Torah Provides Grace and Restoration:** The Torah recognizes human weakness and provides paths for repentance and restoration when people fall short. Sacrificial laws and rituals of atonement exist not to punish but to bring reconciliation with God, highlighting mercy and forgiveness.
- **The Torah is About Instruction, Not Oppression:** The Hebrew word Torah comes from "yarah," which means "to teach" or "to guide" "to point the finger as in teaching." Its Directives are meant to show people how to live a life aligned with God's will, much like a teacher showing students the best way to succeed. It is not a legal system designed to burden or control but a gift meant to enrich life.
- **The Torah Values Justice and Mercy:** A key aspect of the Torah is its emphasis on fairness, compassion, and mercy, such as provisions for caring for the poor, the widow, and the foreigner. It teaches a balanced approach to justice that combines accountability with kindness, which is the opposite of the rigid harshness associated with legalism.
- **In Simple Terms:** The Torah isn't about blindly following rules just to avoid punishment. It's about learning how to live in harmony with God and with others. It teaches us the best way to live, guiding us like a wise teacher or a loving parent. Instead of being a burden, the Torah is meant to help us thrive and grow spiritually.

It's a way of life, a Code of Conduct, or even a Standard of Living, it's not just a rulebook and it is especially not a religion.

## Chapter Focus:

This chapter focuses on defining sin as transgressions against God's Commandments as revealed in the Torah. It will explore the relational and moral implications of sin, emphasizing how it disrupts humanity's connection with God, damages relationships within the community, and hinders personal integrity. By examining the Hebrew Bible's portrayal of sin, we aim to uncover its deeper meaning, the impact of disobedience, and the paths provided for repentance and restoration.

## Section 1

### Defining Sin in the Torah

#### The Biblical Definition of Sin: *Lawlessness*

In understanding the Christian Bible definition of sin, 1 John 3:4 in the Christian Bible provides a foundational statement: *"Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness."* This New Testament perspective aligns closely with the principles of the Torah, where sin is consistently depicted as a violation of God's Commandments.

The Torah defines sin not merely as moral failure but as any act that deviates from the Divine Instructions God has provided to guide humanity. It is an active choice to step outside the boundaries set by God for a righteous life. In this context, lawlessness does not mean the absence of rules; rather, it refers to a willful disregard for The Law of God (Torah) and its purpose of teaching and directing humanity toward holiness and justice.

#### Key Hebrew Terms for Sin in the Torah

The Hebrew Bible uses distinct words to describe sin, each revealing a different aspect of disobedience to God, as examples a few of them are:

**Chata' (חָטָא):** This verb is often translated as "to sin" or "to miss the mark." It describes the act of failing to meet YHWH's standard, falling short of His instructions, or straying from the intended path of righteousness. Chata' emphasizes the human action — the moment when a person veers off course or misses the goal set by divine teaching.

**Chattat (חַטָּאת):** While often translated simply as "sin," this noun carries a more specific meaning. Chattat refers not just to the failure itself but to the condition of guilt or, especially, the sin offering

— the ritual sacrifice required to address and purify that failure. It highlights the means of reconciliation, focusing on the offering that cleanses and restores right relationship with YHWH.

### Comparison

Where chata' is the action of missing,  
chattat is the burden or offering needed to repair that miss.

### Think of it this way:

Chata' → *"I missed the target."*

Chattat → *"Here is what I must bring to make it right."*

*If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him. (Gen. 4:7, KJV)*

Right here is proof that one can master sin, if he or she wants to. Sin can come around all it wants, but if we choose not to, then we do not have the nature to sin. It's a choice.

**“Avon (אָוֹן):** Typically translated as "iniquity," this term emphasizes moral guilt or the perversion of what is right. Avon often implies a conscious bending or twisting of God's commands, leading to moral corruption.

*I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah. (Ps. 32:5, KJV).*

**Pesha” (פֶּשַׁע):** Meaning "rebellion" or "transgression," this term reflects a deliberate act of defiance or breaking of a covenant relationship with God. Pesha highlights willful disobedience and a breach of trust (e.g., Isaiah 1:2).

*Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. (Is. 1:2, KJV)*

These terms are not interchangeable but reflect the complexity of sin. Whether it is a failure to meet God's standard (chata'), a corruption of what is right (“avon), or a deliberate act of rebellion (pesha”), each reveals the gravity and relational impact of sin.

**Key Point:** Understanding these terms helps us see sin not as a single concept but as a spectrum of actions and attitudes that disrupt the covenantal relationship with God and others.

**Words for Sin in the Hebrew Scriptures:**

This list is a more complete definition of the sins listed in Chapter 2. It gives the reader a much more understanding of what sin equates to.

**Ranked List of Sins with Definitions + Scripture References****Human Weakness and Mistakes**

**Shagah** (#7686 שָׁגָה) — To stray, wander, or err; often an unintentional mistake or being deceived.

*Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults. (Ps. 19:12)*

**Ta'ah** (#8582 תָּעָה) — To err, wander, go astray; drifting unintentionally in a moral or spiritual sense.

*My people are lost sheep; their shepherds have led them astray.  
(Jer. 50:6)*

**Naqab** (#5344 נָקַב) — To pierce, bore, perforate; a neutral or physical act, only metaphorically linked to moral failure.

*He shall be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him outside the camp. (Num. 15:35 — refers to blaspheming the Name, sometimes tied to this root)*

**Moral Failure and Social Injustice**

**Chata'** (#2398 חָטָא) — To miss the mark, sin, or fail to meet God's standard; moral failure requiring repentance.

*Against You, You only, I have sinned and done what is evil in Your sight. (Ps. 51:4)*

**Chet** (#2403 חָטָה) — Sin, offense, guilt; wrongdoing and its consequences.

*If a man commits a sin worthy of death, he shall be put to death.  
(Deut. 21:22)*

**‘Avah** (#183 ,אָוָה) — To desire, crave, long for; emotionally charged longing, which can become sinful.

*Do not covet her beauty in your heart, nor let her capture you with her eyelids. (Pro. 6:25)*

**Chamad** (#2530 ,חָמַד) — To desire, covet, or take pleasure in something wrongfully.

*You shall not covet your neighbor's house or wife. (Ex. 20:17)*

**‘Agav** (#5689 ,אָגַב) — To lust or passionately desire, especially in idolatrous or inappropriate contexts.

*They lusted after her, as men lust after a prostitute. (Eze. 23:5)*

**Satah** (#784 ,סָטָה) — To deviate, lead astray, or mislead.

*If any man's wife goes astray and is unfaithful to him. (Num. 5:12)*

**Nasha’** (#5377 ,נָשָׂא) — To deceive or beguile; to mislead into false belief.

*The serpent deceived me, and I ate. (Gen. 3:13)*

**Kachash** (#3584 ,כָּחַשׁ) — To lie, deceive, or fail; falsehood, betrayal.

*Ephraim has surrounded Me with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit. (Hosea 11:12)*

**‘Aqash** (#6140 ,אָקַשׁ) — To twist, distort, or pervert; deeper moral corruption.

*Crooked speech and devious talk put far from you. (Pro. 4:24)*

**‘Ashaq** (#6231 ,אָשָׁק) — To oppress, exploit, defraud; harming others through injustice.

*Do not oppress the widow, the orphan, the stranger, or the poor. (Zech. 7:10)*

**Gazel** (#1497 ,גָּזַל) — To rob, plunder, or seize by force.

*You shall not rob your neighbor, nor extort. (Lev. 19:13)*

**‘Evel** (#5766 ,עָוֵל) — Injustice, unrighteousness, wrongdoing.

*He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of His unfailing love. (Ps. 33:5)*

**Ra’a’** (#7451 ,רָעָא) — Evil, wickedness, harm.

*Depart from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it. (Ps. 34:14)*

**‘Aven** (#205 ,אָוֵן) — Iniquity, wickedness, sorrow; often tied to idolatry.

*For You are not a God who delights in wickedness. (Ps. 5:4)*

**‘Avon** (#5771 ,אָוֹן) — Iniquity, guilt, punishment for sin.

*Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. (Ps. 51:2)*

**‘Asham** (#817 ,אָשָׁם) — Guilt, guilt offering, offense.

*He shall bring his guilt offering to YHWH for the sin he has committed. (Leviticus 5:6)*

### **Treachery, Rebellion, Contempt, and Hardened Wickedness of Mankind**

**Bagad** (#898 ,בָּגַד) — To act treacherously, betray, deceive.

*They have dealt treacherously with YHWH. (Hosea 6:7)*

**Ma’al** (#4603 ,מָעַל) — To act unfaithfully or treacherously, often in covenant betrayal.

*They acted unfaithfully and broke faith with the God of their fathers. (II Chron. 29:6)*

**Na’ats** (#5006 ,נָאַץ) — To despise, show contempt, treat with disdain.

*Because you have despised Me and taken the wife of Uriah. (II Sam. 12:10)*



**Pesha'** (#6588 ,פָּשַׁע) — To rebel, transgress; breaking covenant or divine law deliberately.

*Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; cease to do evil, learn to do good. (Is. 1:16)*

**Rasha'** (#7563 ,רָשָׁע) — Wickedness, injustice, deliberate evil.

*The wicked plots against the righteous and gnashes his teeth at him. (Ps. 37:12)*

### **Commentary: Why This Ranking?**

These terms from least severe to most severe is based upon:

- Whether the sin is unintentional or deliberate.
- Whether it harms only the self, others, or YHWH directly.
- Whether Scripture treats it as occasional failing or hardened rebellion.

At the start, you have wandering and error (Shagah, Ta'ah) — human weakness and mistakes. In the middle, you encounter moral failure and social injustice (Chata', Ashaq, Gazel). At the top, you meet treachery, rebellion, contempt, and hardened wickedness (Bagad, Ma'al, Na'ats, Pesha', Rasha') — sins of the heart that openly defy God's authority.

This ranking is not rigid or absolute, but it only reflects the progression of sin's depth in the Hebrew worldview: from misstep, to corruption, to deliberate revolt.

### **The Hebrew Scriptures underscore this definition in passages such as:**

**Exodus 20:** The Ten Words outline foundational principles for living in Covenant with God and others. Violating these Commandments is seen as transgression against The Law of God.

**Deut. 30:10-14:** This passage affirms that God's Commandments are neither distant nor unattainable but clear and accessible. To sin, therefore, is to reject what has been graciously revealed and within reach.

*If thou shalt hearken unto the Voice of the LORD thy God, to keep His Commandments and His Statutes which are written in this Book of the Law, and if thou turn unto the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul. For this Commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for*

*us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it. (Deut. 30:10-14)*

By framing sin as lawlessness, the Bible emphasizes its deeply relational nature. Sin is not merely about breaking rules; it represents a breach of trust and a disruption of the harmony between humanity and God. It can involve a deliberate choice to rebel against God's authority, disregard His teachings, and disrupt the order and goodness He intended for creation. At the same time, sin can also arise from unintentional failures—sincere attempts to do right that fall short of the intended goal. This concept, often referred to as "*missing the mark*," is comparable to an archer aiming for the bullseye of a target but either missing the center or failing to hit the target altogether. This imagery underscores both the imperfections of human effort and the high standard of God's holiness.

**Key Point:** Sin, as defined in both the Torah and the New Testament, is lawlessness—it can be a deliberate stepping away from God's Instructions or merely not being able to successfully complete a task, or missing the mark. Understanding these definition highlights the relational and moral dimensions of sin, laying the foundation for exploring its implications and the pathways for restoration provided in the Hebrew Scriptures.

### **Why Scripture Doesn't Rank Sins as Minor or Moderate**

In modern thinking, we often divide sins into neat categories: small, moderate, and severe. We tell ourselves that a lie is not as bad as murder, or that personal temptation is less weighty than rebellion. But the Hebrew Scriptures offer a strikingly different view — one rooted not in scale, but in relationship.

In the biblical worldview, sin is not primarily about the size of the act; it's about the breach of Covenant between humanity and YHWH. Whether we miss the mark by a little or a lot, we have still stepped off the path of life He has laid before us. As it is written, "*Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults.*" (Psalm 19:12) Even the hidden, unintentional sins require forgiveness because they create a rupture in the holy relationship.

Moral failures — no matter how small — are never dismissed as "light" or "moderate." They matter because they pull us away from the heart of YHWH's Instruction.

And when we turn to social injustice, the stakes rise even higher. The prophets thunder not just against personal immorality but against the systematic exploitation, oppression, and violence that rot a society from within. To defraud a neighbor, to oppress the widow, to rob the poor — these

are not moderate offenses. They are national betrayals, threatening the very fabric of covenant life and drawing down divine judgment, as the words of Isaiah warn:

*Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees. Is. 10:1)*

Scripture does not give us the comfort of ranking sins into safe, moderate categories. Instead, it calls us to examine every step we take on the path of righteousness, to guard both personal holiness and societal justice, and to walk humbly and faithfully before our God.

### **Other Sins Include:**

**Idolatry** (Avodah Zarah): Worship of other gods or idols, violating the exclusivity of worship owed to the God of Israel (Ex. 20:3-5).

**Bearing False Witness:** Giving dishonest testimony, which undermines justice and violates communal trust (Ex. 20:16).

### **The Former Lists of Sin that Support the Central Question:**

The Hebrew Bible's teachings on sin emphasize the relational aspect of human actions, particularly how these actions impact relationships with God, others, and the community. This is in stark contrast to later theological interpretations in Christianity and Judaism, which often tend to focus on sin in more individualistic or legalistic terms. Here's how the words from the earlier list reflect the relational nature of sin in the Hebrew Bible. The following are just a few examples, which will allow the reader to be able to see a word and distinguish how it can affect one's relationship with God or his or her fellow person.

### **Chamad (חָמַד) – Desire or Coveting**

- **Relational Impact:** In the Hebrew Bible, the act of coveting or desiring something that belongs to someone else (especially in the Ten Words, Ex. 20:17) directly disrupts relationships within the community. This type of sin emphasizes jealousy and envy, which undermine trust and foster division between individuals and families. It is not simply a matter of an individual's internal struggle but one that has external consequences on relationships, especially in a communal and covenantal context.
- **Community Dynamics:** When a person covets, it leads to greed and theft (Gazel, mentioned later), breaking the social fabric of the community. This shows that sin is not only an individual offense but a collective harm that disrupts harmony within the Covenantal society.

### Chata' (חַטָּא) – To Miss the Mark, Sin

- **Relational Impact:** Sin, in the Hebrew Bible, is often depicted as failing to meet God's standards or straying from His commandments (e.g., Leviticus 4:2). The concept of missing the mark emphasizes a broken relationship with God. Sin disrupts this vertical relationship (God and humanity) and creates separation between the person who sinned and God. It is not just about legal violation but about the failure to live in right relationship with God's guidance.
- **Community Dynamics:** Sin also impacts the community because the community's covenant with God is based on collective adherence to His laws. When an individual or group sins, it affects the well-being and purity of the entire people (e.g., when Israel was judged for sinning as a whole, such as during Achan's sin in Joshua 7). Repentance is often required not just for the individual but for the restoration of the community to God.

### Chet (חֵט) – Sin, Offense, or Guilt

- **Relational Impact:** Chet is often used interchangeably with Chata' but emphasizes the guilt or the offense itself. The relationship between the individual and God is marred by guilt, which can only be cleansed through atonement. The relational nature of this term underscores the fact that sin is not just about personal failure but about disrupting the harmony of the covenant community's relationship with God.
- **Community Dynamics:** When individuals sin, it is often a community-wide issue because it impacts God's favor or disfavor toward the whole nation. The atonement process (e.g., sacrifices) is meant to restore not only the individual but the community's standing before God, reinforcing that sin is a communal issue.

### 'Evel (עָוֵל) – Injustice, Wrongdoing

- **Relational Impact:** This word refers to unrighteousness or moral corruption that disrupts justice. In a relational context, it highlights how sin harms interpersonal relationships by causing injustice and inequality. An act of injustice damages not only the person wronged but also the community's sense of fairness and trust in God's justice.
- **Community Dynamics:** 'Evel emphasizes how personal wrongdoing and the failure to uphold justice within the community are interlinked. It underscores that sin is not only an act of disobedience against God but an offense against human relationships, particularly when it results in oppression, unfair treatment, or deceit within the community. The prophets often called Israel to return to justice and righteousness, recognizing that these are foundational to maintaining a healthy covenant relationship.

### Gazel (גָּזַל) – To Rob, Plunder, or Seize

- **Relational Impact:** This word focuses on theft and injustice in a direct relational sense. Stealing violates the trust between individuals and tears apart relationships, especially within a covenantal community where mutual respect and care for one another's property are fundamental values. The Hebrew Bible treats theft as not just a legal transgression but a betrayal of mutual love and respect between members of the community.
- **Community Dynamics:** Theft is a serious offense because it doesn't just hurt the individual robbed; it breaks down the trust that holds the community together. The commandments and laws against theft show that a community that allows such acts to flourish will lose its unity and stability. Restitution and reconciliation (i.e., paying back what was stolen) are necessary for restoring peace within the community.

### **Key Takeaways:**

Sin in the Hebrew Bible is relational, impacting one's relationship with God and with others in the community. Sin is not isolated but is a disruption of the fabric of life that God intended for His people to live in harmony with Him and one another.

Community and God's Covenant are inseparable in Hebrew thought. When an individual sins, it affects the whole community, and their relationship with God becomes strained. Conversely, repentance, atonement, and restoration bring healing not only to the individual but also to the community as a whole.

### **Contrast with Christianity and Judaism:**

**Christianity:** While the Hebrew Bible emphasizes the collective responsibility of sin and the community's role in atonement, later Christian theology tends to focus more on personal salvation and individual guilt. Christianity places significant emphasis on Jesus' atonement for sin and personal repentance, which shifts the focus from a community's communal sin to an individual's need for reconciliation with God through faith in Jesus.

**Judaism:** While the relational aspect in the Hebrew Bible is foundational, later Rabbinic Judaism tends to focus more on individual responsibility in keeping the law and repentance (Teshuvah) for restoring one's relationship with God. However, communal atonement (such as during Yom Kippur) is still central, reflecting the ongoing communal aspect of sin in Jewish practice.

In conclusion, the Hebrew Bible's teachings about sin highlight broken relationships with God, others, and the community, emphasizing that sin is not just personal but social. The restoration of these relationships is central to the biblical understanding of sin and repentance.

**Key Point:** Sin is not an abstract concept but a clear violation of God's Commandments, or simply missing the mark, which is rooted in deliberate choices and actions.

## Section 2

### Examples of Sins Explicitly Outlined in the Torah

**The following are specific examples of sins as defined in the Torah:**

**Idolatry:** A direct violation of the first commandments, undermining the relationship with God.

*You shall not make for yourselves an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth below or in the waters beneath the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God... (Ex. 20:4-5, NIV)*

This passage directly forbids the creation and worship of idols, emphasizing that God alone is to be worshiped.

**False Witness:** Disrupts trust and justice within the community.

*You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. (Ex. 20:16, NIV)*

This Commandment forbids bearing false witness, which includes lying or providing dishonest information, especially in a legal or judicial context. It emphasizes the importance of truthfulness and integrity in relationships with others.

**Theft:** Highlights sin's relational aspect by harming others and breaking The Law of God.

*You shall not steal. (Ex. 20:15, NIV)*

This commandment is a direct prohibition against taking what belongs to others, underscoring the importance of respecting others' property and maintaining honesty in one's dealings.

The Torah's moral clarity in categorizing behaviors such as idolatry, false witness, and theft as transgressions against God and others is striking and foundational to its ethical framework. Each of these commandments not only defines a clear moral boundary but also reveals the interconnectedness between our relationship with God and our relationship with others.

**Idolatry: A Transgression Against God**

The prohibition against idolatry, as seen in Ex. 20:4-5, is not merely a concern about physical idols or images, but also a broader warning against giving ultimate devotion to anything other than God. Idolatry is a form of spiritual betrayal, where one places trust and reverence in created things rather than the Creator. This violates the first Commandment to love and serve God alone.

Idolatry, therefore, is not just a matter of personal choice or cultural expression but a deep moral breach that damages the relationship between the worshiper and God. It reveals a heart that seeks something other than God for security, meaning, and purpose. When one worships idols, it distorts the understanding of God's true nature and compromises the foundation of moral clarity that God desires for His people.

**False Witness: A Transgression Against Justice and Truth**

The Commandment in Ex. 20:16, "*You shall not bear false witness*," extends beyond personal dishonesty to encompass the distortion of truth, especially in the context of justice. False testimony harms not only the individuals involved but also undermines the integrity of the legal and societal systems. In a broader sense, it disrespects God, who is the ultimate source of truth and justice.

By prohibiting false witness, the Torah underscores that truth is essential for justice to be properly administered. Dishonesty in matters of testimony defiles both the person who lies and the community that is misled. It is a transgression against God's justice and against the victim who is wrongfully accused.

***The moral clarity here is evident:** Truth is sacred because it reflects the very nature of God, and by lying, one dishonors both God and fellow human beings.*

**Theft: A Transgression Against Ownership and Dignity**

The prohibition against theft in Ex. 20:15 is a clear and direct ethical statement that highlights the sanctity of personal property and the dignity of others. Theft violates the rightful ownership of another person and denies them the fruits of their labor and resources. It is not merely a legal infraction but an assault on the autonomy and integrity of another human being.

In Torah morality, theft is seen as a transgression that disregards both the rights of the individual and the community. It suggests that material wealth is a gift from God, and by stealing, one is rejecting God's provision and plan for individuals. More than just taking what is not yours, theft is a denial of the moral responsibility to respect the boundaries that God has established between individuals. In this way, theft disrupts both social harmony and the individual's relationship with God.

### **The Interconnectedness of These Laws**

The Torah's moral clarity categorizes these behaviors as offenses not only against individuals but also against God because all human interactions are seen through the lens of Divine Law. God's Commandments are not just about private morality but about the establishment of a just and peaceful community. Transgressions like idolatry, false witness, and theft are not isolated acts but actions that have broader consequences, damaging both personal integrity and communal well-being.

The Torah teaches that how we should treat others—whether through truth-telling, respecting their property, or honoring God—reflects the state of our relationship with God. In this way, the Commandments serve as a moral blueprint for living in harmony with God's will and with one another, underscoring the profound truth that our ethical behavior towards others is a reflection of our reverence and commitment to God.

By emphasizing these principles, the Torah offers not just laws but a clear moral vision that is as relevant today as it was in ancient times. It calls believers to live with honesty, respect, and devotion to God, maintaining the integrity of both their spiritual and social lives.

**Key Point:** Each sin has communal and relational consequences, underscoring the importance of obedience to The Law of Gods.

## **Section 3**

### **Intentional vs. Unintentional Sin**

Leviticus 4 provides a key distinction between intentional and unintentional sins, emphasizing the nature of sin and the required response for atonement. This distinction is crucial for understanding the gravity of sin in the Torah, where the intent behind the act determines both the moral and sacrificial responses.

#### **Unintentional Sins (Leviticus 4)**

Unintentional sins are those committed out of ignorance or a lack of awareness. In Leviticus chapter 4, this chapter outlines the various scenarios in which a person might sin unintentionally. It describes how different groups—whether a priest, leader, or common person—should bring specific offerings for atonement if they sin unknowingly.

For example, the priest who sins unintentionally in regard to the community's sin offerings must bring a young bull without defect (Lev. 4:3). Similarly, if a leader or a common person sin in ignorance, they must bring an offering such as a goat or a female lamb (Lev. 4:23, 28). The key



idea here is that the sin was not deliberate; it was a mistake made in ignorance, and therefore it requires an offering for atonement.

The sin offering in these cases serves to restore the individual's relationship with God and the community. It represents a recognition that sin has still occurred, even if the person did not intend to offend God. Atonement for unintentional sins is both a means of acknowledging the wrongdoing and a way to seek reconciliation with God. The emphasis is on humility, repentance, and the recognition that God's holiness must be honored, even when one sins inadvertently.

### **Intentional Sins: Deliberate Rebellion** (Numbers 15:30-31)

In contrast, intentional sins are deliberate acts of rebellion, often described as acts done "with a high hand" or "defiant sin." These sins are committed knowingly and with intent to go against the Instructions of God, without regard for His holiness or authority.

Numbers expands on the concept of deliberate defiance, stating:

*But anyone who sins defiantly, whether native-born or foreigner, blasphemes the LORD, and that person must be cut off from the people of Israel. Because they have despised the LORD's word and broken His Commands, they must surely be cut off; their guilt remains on them. (Num. 15:30-31, NIV)*

This passage clarifies the severity of high-handed sin, which is not a sin committed in ignorance, but one that involves a deliberate act of rebellion against God's will. The phrase "with a high hand" implies a bold, unrepentant attitude—an open defiance against God's authority. There is a clear rejection of God's command, and the person chooses to sin willfully, knowing full well the implications of their actions.

### **Consequences of Intentional Sin**

The consequences of intentional sin are far more severe than those for unintentional sin. While unintentional sins can be atoned for with a specific sacrifice, intentional sins carry the penalty of being cut off from the people of Israel. This means being excluded from the Covenant community and experiencing spiritual death, which highlights the seriousness with which God treats deliberate rebellion.

The concept of being "cut off" speaks to the separation from God's presence and the loss of divine favor. It is a punishment that acknowledges the defiance and conscious rejection of God's commandments, reflecting the gravity of turning away from the Covenant relationship with God.

### **The Distinction and the Call for Repentance**

The distinction between intentional and unintentional sins in the Torah is not just a legal classification but a reflection of the different attitudes toward sin. Unintentional sins are treated with mercy and grace, requiring a sacrifice to atone for the mistake and restore the individual's standing before God. These sins, while serious, are forgiven through repentance and atonement, as the person did not sin out of malice or defiance.

Intentional sins, however, represent a more serious breach. When a person sins deliberately, they actively choose rebellion against God's will, and their relationship with God is deeply damaged. For such sins, the requirement of atonement is more severe, and the possibility of forgiveness requires deep repentance and a recognition of the seriousness of their actions.

The high-handed sin described in Num. 15:30-31 calls for severe consequences because it reflects a willful refusal to acknowledge God's sovereignty. This defiant sin is treated differently because the sinner does not seek reconciliation, and their behavior jeopardizes not only their relationship with God but also the health of the Covenant community.

### **Summary**

The Torah's treatment of sin emphasizes the importance of intent. Unintentional sins, while needing atonement, are not viewed as rebellious acts but rather as mistakes that can be rectified. In contrast, intentional sins, particularly those done with a "high hand," involve a direct challenge to God's authority and are treated with severe consequences, underscoring the importance of humility, repentance, and the serious nature of sin in God's eyes.

**Key Point:** The Torah provides a nuanced understanding of sin, recognizing human fallibility while emphasizing personal accountability.

## **Section 4**

### **Sin as Actions, not Inherent Nature**

The Torah's perspective on sin contrasts sharply with the concept of original sin as understood in some branches of Christianity. While the doctrine of original sin suggests that all humans inherit a sinful nature due to the fall of Adam and Eve, the Hebrew Bible presents a different understanding: **sin is viewed as a choice to disobey God's Commandments rather than an inherent flaw or condition passed down from generation to generation.** This distinction has profound implications for how sin is understood and how the possibility of repentance and righteousness is framed.

## Sin in the Hebrew Bible

### A Choice to Obey or Disobey

In the Torah, sin is framed not as something innate or inherited, but as a deliberate action or a failure to act according to God's commandments. Each individual is responsible for their own choices. The Hebrew Bible emphasizes personal agency, the freedom to choose, and the accountability of the individual for their actions.

For example, when Adam and Eve sin by eating from the Tree of Knowledge in Gen. 3, their act is portrayed as a conscious decision, not a result of an inherited sinful nature. They chose to act against God's direct command, and as a consequence, they experienced separation from God and the onset of human suffering. However, this story doesn't suggest that all of humanity inherits this sin in a metaphysical sense, but rather that each person, like Adam and Eve, has the freedom to choose obedience or rebellion.

The Torah's moral system makes it clear that sin is something one chooses to do, and that choice is not forced upon anyone by an inherent flaw in their nature. Obedience to God's Commandments is always presented as a viable option, and it is through these choices that individuals shape their moral and spiritual lives. The responsibility is placed firmly on the individual's ability to choose between right and wrong, between following God's will or transgressing His laws.

### Free Will in Deuteronomy 30:10-14

A key passage that highlights the Torah's understanding of sin as a matter of free will is Deut. 30:10-14, which underscores that individuals have the power to choose obedience over transgression:

*If you obey the LORD your God and keep His commands and decrees that are written in this Book of the Law and turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you... Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, 'Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?' Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, 'Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?' No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it. (Deut. 30:10-14, NIV)*

In these verses, Moses emphasizes that the commandments of God are not beyond human ability to fulfill. The Torah's teachings are accessible and within reach, suggesting that humans are

capable of making the right choice to obey God. This contrasts with the idea that sin is an inevitable or predetermined flaw in human nature, as it affirms the free will of individuals to choose obedience.

The passage explicitly says that the Commandments are "*in your mouth and in your heart*," indicating that the ability to understand and choose the right path is inherent in every individual. The Hebrew Bible teaches that sin is not an unavoidable part of human existence but a choice to act in accordance with or in rebellion against God's will.

### **The Rejection of Inherited Sin**

The idea of original sin, which suggests that all humans are born with an inherent sinful nature due to Adam's fall, does not align with the Torah's teachings. The Torah consistently teaches that every person is born pure and has the ability to choose righteousness. For example, the book of Ezekiel states:

*The soul who sins is the one who will die. The child will not share the guilt of the parent, nor will the parent share the guilt of the child.*  
(Eze. 18:20, NIV)

This verse rejects the idea of inherited sin, emphasizing individual responsibility for sin. The notion of sin as an inherited condition would contradict the message that each person is responsible for their own choices and has the ability to turn towards God and choose obedience.

### **Emphasis on Repentance and Return to God**

The Torah also presents a robust concept of repentance and return (teshuvah), which further underscores the idea that sin is a choice rather than an inescapable flaw. When someone sins, they are not condemned to eternal separation from God, but are instead given the opportunity to repent and return to righteousness. This aligns with the message in Deut. 30:15-16, where Moses urges the people to choose life by loving God and following His Commandments.

The Torah's view of repentance assumes that individuals have the ability to choose to do better—a freedom that would be irrelevant if sin were an inherent trait from birth. The potential for repentance presupposes that the power to choose obedience over disobedience remains within the individual, no matter their past mistakes.

### **Conclusion**

In contrast to the idea of sin as an inherent flaw or a condition passed down through generations, the Hebrew Bible teaches that sin is fundamentally a matter of choice. Every person has the ability to obey or disobey God's commandments, and the consequences of their actions are a reflection of their free will. The Torah emphasizes that the Commandments of God are accessible and within

the grasp of every individual, reinforcing the idea that each person is responsible for their own choices. Through repentance, individuals can always return to God, highlighting that sin is a matter of personal decision, not an unavoidable inheritance. The Torah's moral system stands as a call to actively choose obedience, aligning human actions with God's will through the exercise of free will.

**Key Point:** The Torah empowers individuals to live righteously by following The Law of Gods.

## Summarizing this Article's Key Points:

### Sin as a Transgression of God's Commandments

In the Torah, sin is explicitly defined as violating God's commandments. The Hebrew word for sin, חַטָּא (chet), literally means "to miss the mark," indicating a deviation from the path of righteousness established by God. This concept highlights that sin is not an arbitrary wrongdoing but a failure to align one's actions with the divine will.

The Commandments in the Torah provide a clear moral structure, covering all aspects of life—ethical behavior, ritual purity, justice, and interpersonal relationships. Lev. 19:2 summarizes the Torah's ethical vision:

*Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy. (Lev. 19:2)*

By disobeying these Commandments, whether intentionally or unintentionally, an individual not only transgresses a specific law but also rejects God's authority and holiness.

### The Torah's Moral Code: Addressing Intentional and Unintentional Sins

The Torah distinguishes between intentional and unintentional sins, recognizing the role of human intent in moral accountability.

- **Unintentional Sins:** These occur out of ignorance or mistake and are treated with compassion. Leviticus 4 outlines specific sacrifices for atonement, reflecting God's mercy and the opportunity to restore the relationship. This acknowledges human fallibility while emphasizing the need to rectify even unintended wrongs.
- **Intentional Sins:** Deliberate acts of rebellion, such as idolatry or high-handed defiance, are treated with greater severity. Num. 15:30-31 warns that such sins show contempt for God's Commandments and result in being "cut off" from the community. This underscores the moral weight of conscious rebellion against divine authority.

By addressing both categories, the Torah provides a practical and attainable moral framework, affirming that obedience is within human capability (Deut. 30:11-14) while emphasizing the seriousness of all transgressions.

### **Sin as Relational: Disrupting the Covenant with God and the Community**

The Torah views sin not just as a legal infraction but as a relational breach that disrupts the covenant with God and damages communal harmony.

- **Disruption of the Covenant with God:** The Torah is centered on the covenant between God and Israel, where obedience to God's commandments is an expression of loyalty and love. Sin violates this covenant, creating a rift between the sinner and God. This is why acts like idolatry are seen as profound betrayals—they strike at the heart of the relationship.
- **Harm to the Community:** Sin also affects others within the covenant community. For instance, Lev. 19:18 commands, "*Love your neighbor as yourself.*" A breach of this principle—whether through theft, false witness, or other sins—creates social discord and undermines communal trust. This communal dimension is why sacrifices for atonement often involved public rituals, emphasizing the need for both individual and communal reconciliation.

### **Conclusion**

The Torah presents sin as a transgression of God's commandments, emphasizing human responsibility and moral clarity. Its moral code is not only attainable but also deeply relational, recognizing that sin disrupts both the sacred bond with God and the harmony of the community. Through repentance, sacrifices, and obedience, the Torah provides a pathway to restore these broken relationships, reaffirming the covenant and guiding individuals and the nation toward holiness and justice.

***Reflective statement:** Through the Torah, we gain a clearer understanding of sin's true nature—not as an inherent corruption but as a choice to either align with God's will or turn away from it.*

As we've explored the Torah's teaching on sin, we begin to see the clear, action-based nature of sin and its relational impact. How does this understanding of sin compare with the Christian view of inherited sin or the Jewish focus on repentance? To help you reflect on the material, consider these questions:

***Reflective Questions:** How does the Hebrew Bible's definition of sin as lawlessness shape your understanding of the human condition?*

Do you find the Hebrew Bible's distinction between intentional and unintentional sin compelling? How does it impact your view on personal responsibility?

What role do you believe free will plays in the process of overcoming sin? After reading this article do you agree with the idea that sin is a choice rather than an inherent flaw?

### **Closing Reflection**

Sin is not merely the breaking of rules—it is the breaking of relationship. It is turning from the ancient path, stepping outside the protective borders of YHWH's Covenant, and declaring, "I will choose for myself what is good and what is evil." But the Torah was given that we might live. It is the light for our path, the boundary of blessing, the definition of righteousness. To understand sin rightly is to fear YHWH rightly. And to fear YHWH rightly is to begin to walk in His wisdom and obey His Torah. Let us return to the ancient definitions, to the Words spoken from fire and cloud, to the Covenant cut in wilderness wonder. There, we will find life. There, we will understand what sin really is—and why it matters.

## **Questions To Ponder:**

**If sin is defined by the Torah, what does it mean when a person says they are no longer “under the Law”?**

**Answer** → It says that they are taking the word over a self-proclaimed apostle over that of the Words of the Most-High. Are they saying they are no longer bound by YHWH’s definition of righteousness?

**Can someone truly repent if they don’t know what they’ve broken?**

**Answer** → No, how can one turn from something that they do not know that they have broken? If repentance actually means and requires turning from sin, then Torah must first define what sin is.

**If the Torah is eternal, how can sin—which is violation of Torah—be temporary or done away with?**

**Answer** → How can the standard of holiness change if YHWH does not change?

**How could a self-proclaimed apostle teach that the Law (Torah) has been abolished. Was he greater than the Most-High? Did Paul have the authority to abolish the Law?**

**Answer** → No, there is nowhere in the Hebrew Scriptures that teaches that any man can abolish what God has established. How can man undo what God has set-forth?

**How does modern religion redefine sin to fit its own doctrines, and what dangers come with that?**

**Answer** → When sin is defined by denominational rules or feelings, truth becomes relative and obedience is optional.

**Why is it easier for people to accept a “Savior from sin” than to walk in obedience and avoid sin?**

**Answer** → Is salvation being sold as a shortcut to bypass repentance and obedience?



**What does it say about a belief system if it claims the Law is abolished, but still holds people accountable for sin?**

**Answer** → This is a powerful question—and one Christianity has yet to answer without tripping over its own doctrine.

Paul taught that the Law was abolished. But according to Paul himself, “*through the Law comes the knowledge of sin*” (Romans 3:20), and “*I would not have known what sin was except through the Law*” (Romans 7:7).

So... if the Law has truly been done away with, how can there still be sin?

If there is no Law, there is no sin.

And if there is no sin, then there is no need for a savior.

And if there's no need for a savior—why does Christianity teach we still need Jesus?

This is the million-dollar question.

The entire Christian framework falls apart under its own contradictions. On one hand, it claims the Law has been nailed to the cross. On the other hand, it warns people to repent of sin—which it defines using the very Law it says is abolished.

So again, we ask:

**Why is Christianity still holding people accountable for sin—if the standard of sin has supposedly been removed?**

**How many sins in modern churches are cultural taboos rather than Torah transgressions?**

**Answer** → Have we traded YHWH's standards for manmade codes of behavior?

**Is there such a thing as accidental sin? How does Torah address this?**

**Answer** → Torah differentiates between unintentional and intentional sin—and gives different remedies for each.

**What would happen if sin were truly seen as betrayal of the Covenant?**

Answer → Would people take it more seriously if they understood it as spiritual adultery?

**Why did YHWH give such detailed instructions if He didn't expect us to follow them?**

Answer → Is sin truly about disobedience—or about disregarding the heart of the Covenant, which is the Heart of YHWH?

**How do Christianity's and Judaism's views on sin shape their approaches to repentance and redemption?**

**Answer:**

Judaism understands sin primarily as an action — a failure to uphold the covenant, to walk faithfully in YHWH's ways. Repentance (teshuvah) is seen as a return to the right path, a restoration of relationship through heartfelt turning, confession, and right action. Redemption is communal and covenantal: the people as a whole must return, not just the individual.

Christianity, particularly from an Augustinian and Pauline lens, views sin largely as an inherited flaw — original sin passed down from Adam, requiring divine intervention through a savior figure. Repentance is often framed less as returning to Torah obedience and more as believing in the atoning work of that savior. Redemption, therefore, is presented more as a spiritual rescue from human incapacity than a communal return to covenant.

**Which perspective resonates more with your understanding of sin — an inherited flaw or a result of actions?**

**Answer:**

From the standpoint of the Hebrew Scriptures, sin is a result of human actions, not an inborn defect. People are born with the capacity for good or evil, but sin arises when they choose to deviate from YHWH's instruction — to miss the mark, rebel, or distort what is right. While human nature is certainly frail and prone to failure, the Hebrew Bible places the responsibility squarely on human choice and offers a clear path of return. It is not about escaping an inherited condition but about walking rightly, repenting when one falls, and restoring the broken relationship through covenantal faithfulness.

**Why do you think sin is a central concept in faith traditions across time and cultures?**

**Answer:**

Because at its heart, sin reflects the universal human struggle with limitation, selfishness, pride, and the misuse of freedom. Across cultures, people instinctively recognize that there is a right and a wrong — a way things ought to be. Sin emerges as the name for that breach, that falling short, that turning away. Faith traditions recognize that without confronting this rupture, no society, no individual, no world can flourish. Sin is central because it speaks to the deepest reality of human existence: our profound need to live in alignment with something higher, truer, and holier — and our tragic, repeated failure to do so.

**Closing Reflection**

Sin is not merely the breaking of rules—it is the breaking of relationship. It is turning from the ancient path, stepping outside the protective borders of YHWH's Covenant, and declaring, "I will choose for myself what is good and what is evil." But the Torah was given that we might live. It is the light for our path, the boundary of blessing, the definition of righteousness. To understand sin rightly is to fear YHWH rightly. And to fear YHWH rightly is to begin to walk in wisdom. Let us return to the ancient definitions, to the Words spoken from fire and cloud, to the Covenant cut in wilderness wonder. There, we will find life. There, we will understand what sin really is—and why it matters.

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ הָלַלְנוּ יְהוָה ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆