

# ORIGIN OF SIN

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## Sin & Evil

*In the Aramaic Language and culture that Jesus taught in, the terms for "sin" and "evil" were archery terms. When the archer shot at the target and missed the scorekeeper yelled the Aramaic word for sin. It meant that you were off the mark, take another shot. The concept of sin was to be positive mental feedback. Sin is when you are operating from inaccurate information and thus a perceptual mis-take. When you become conscious and aware of the results of your inaccuracy you have the option to reconsider what you have learned and do as they do in Hollywood, "do another take." By the way, where the arrow fell when it missed the target was referred to as evil.*

To Christ and his contemporaries "*hamartia*" would simply mean a violation of God's law.

*In biblical Hebrew, the generic word for sin is *het*. It means to err, to miss the mark. Judaism teaches that sin is an act, and not a state of being, while Christianity (at some point) decided we were all born in a state of sin.*

In Judaism, all human beings are believed to have free will and can choose the path in life that they will take. It does not teach that choosing good is impossible - only at times more difficult. There is almost always a "way back" if a person wills it.

The most important word is *het*; with its numerous verbal and nominal variations, *het* occurs nearly 600 times in the Hebrew Bible. The root meaning of the word is "to miss the mark."

In general, Judaism adopts a pragmatic attitude to human failings and the remedy for a breach of the law is largely practical, e.g., the bringing of a sin offering, restitution, and Atonement. In this system of practical religion little is said about the origin of sin or about any difference in man before and after Adam's sin. Accordingly, there is no significant recognition in Judaism of the effect of man's first sin on his descendants. In spite of a few ambiguous references, mainly in Hasidic and Kabbalistic literature, the mainstream of classical Judaism clearly rejects any suggestion that sinfulness in human nature is a legacy from Adam's "original sin." The assertion that God will "visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the children" (Ex. 20:5) is not taken as a theological statement of the inevitable transmission of sin from generation to generation. In fact, it does not actually teach that children will be punished for the sins of the fathers but refers to a situation in which the children are also "them that hate Me." The doctrine of

individual responsibility that is expounded in Deuteronomy 24:16 and Ezekiel 18:1-4 is central in Judaism.

Whenever the rabbis attempted to trace the psychological origin of sin, they ascribed it to the yetser ha-ra, the "evil inclination" that is innate to human nature. This approach to the "psychology of sin" is also prominent in Kabbalistic thinking and in the ethical literature of Hasidism. It is also the meaning of the statement, "For there is not a righteous man upon earth who does good and does not sin" (Eccl. 7:26). For with the yetser ha-ra there is also the yetser ha-tov, the "good inclination" (see Good and Evil). Moreover, Judaism insists, as one of its basic teachings, that man is blessed with Free Will. The consequence of such freedom is that while he may be overcome, even momentarily, by his evil inclination, which leads him into sin, he can choose to master it. Man is thus free to obey or disobey, to fulfill the commandments of God or to reject them, and this is the challenge with which he is faced. In Jewish thought, every normal person enjoys such freedom, at least to an extent that enables him to make a moral choice.

***Throughout the entire literature, it is made abundantly clear that sin can be remedied and that the estrangement of man from God can be repaired by the exercise of sincere Repentance, which alone can restore man's wholeness.***