

OPEN YOUR BIBLE

Study Companion

Hamartia — ἁμαρτία

Sin, “Missing the Mark,” Wrongdoing—and What the Greek Word Can Actually Tell Us

A printable companion for tracing hamartia through Greek usage, the Hebrew Scriptures, the Septuagint, Yeshua, Paul, First John, James, and Hebrews.

Use this packet with your Bible open. Write what the passages say before deciding what the word “must” mean. Keep lexical evidence separate from theological conclusions.

WORD-STUDY RULE

The history of a word can illuminate its range. Context determines its sense. “Missing the mark” is connected to the hamartanō word family, but it is not a universal New Testament definition of hamartia.

Before You Study

Define sin in one sentence before looking anything up.

What have you been taught about “missing the mark”?

Do you currently think sin is primarily an act, a condition, a power, rebellion, failure, or something else?

Keep These Questions Beside You

- What Greek or Hebrew word is actually present?
- Is the text describing an act, guilt, condition, or ruling power?
- Is the person acting knowingly, ignorantly, weakly, or defiantly?
- What does the surrounding paragraph identify as wrong?
- Is sacrificial language present?
- Am I using etymology as though it were a dictionary definition?
- What does this passage prove, and what still requires interpretation?

Lexical Snapshot

ἁμαρτία — hamartia

Broad Greek range may include failure, fault, guilt, sin.

Related verb:

ἁμαρτάνω — hamartanō

Possible wider senses include miss, fail, err, do wrong, sin.

Related adjective:

ἁμαρτωλός — hamartōlos

Sinner / sinful person.

Why is “sin” usually a better New Testament gloss than “missing the mark”?

What is the difference between a word’s history and its meaning in a sentence?

My First Working Definition

The “Missing” Evidence

Judges 20:14–16

The Hebrew verb חָטָא — chata’ is used of skilled slingers who do not miss.

Is this use moral or nonmoral?

What does this prove about the word family?

What does it NOT prove about every biblical use of sin vocabulary?

Cain and Sodom

Genesis 4:1–16

How is sin pictured before Cain kills Abel?

What does Cain’s response show about agency and responsibility?

Genesis 18:16–33

How is Sodom’s sin described?

Does “honest mistake” adequately describe the moral weight of the passage?

Unintentional vs. High-Handed

Leviticus 4-5; Numbers 15:22-31

What provisions exist for unintentional sin?

How does Numbers 15 describe defiant/high-handed action?

What does this distinction prevent us from oversimplifying?

Do not make every sin identical in knowledge, intention, or posture. Scripture itself distinguishes categories.

Psalm 51: A Vocabulary Field

List the wrongdoing words and images you notice in Psalm 51.

Why is it dangerous to force one word to carry every aspect of the doctrine of sin?

Yeshua and Sin

Matthew 1:18-21

What does Yeshua save His people FROM?

Mark 2:1-12

What does Yeshua's forgiveness claim reveal about sin?

John 9:1-7

What simplistic connection between suffering and personal sin does Yeshua refuse?

Romans 3:23 — Two Different Greek Ideas

"All have sinned" uses the hamartanō word family.

"Fall short" uses ὑστερέω — hystereō.

Why does this matter for the claim that hamartia “means falling short”?

What theological connection between sin and falling short does the whole verse still teach?

Romans 5: Sin Enters and Reigns

Read Romans 5:12–21.

What does Sin do in this passage?

How does Adam's act affect more than Adam?

What does this passage prove about hamartia beyond isolated wrong actions?

Romans 6: Sin as Master

List the verbs/actions associated with Sin in Romans 6.

How does Paul hold enslaving power and personal responsibility together?

What does grace do to the believer's relationship with Sin?

Romans 7: Torah Is Not Sin

What question does Paul explicitly reject?

How does Paul describe the commandment?

What does Sin do with the commandment?

Romans 8:3 — Sacrificial Echo?

περὶ ἁμαρτίας — peri hamartias

This phrase can carry Septuagintal sacrificial resonance.

What does Romans 8:1–4 say God did about Sin?

Why can't the noun hamartia alone prove that the phrase must be translated "sin offering"?

Sin and Related Words

Match the term with its ordinary sense:

- ἁμαρτία — hamartia
- ἀνομία — anomia
- ἀδικία — adikia
- παράβασις — parabasis
- παράπτωμα — paraptōma

Write your working gloss beside each.

First John

1 John 1:5–2:6

What should believers do when they sin?

What does John say about claiming to have no sin?

1 John 3:1–10

Greek:

ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐστὶν ἡ ἀνομία

hē hamartia estin hē anomia

Does John give an etymology or a theological identification?

What distinction do you see between committing sin and practicing sin?

1 John 5:17

What other moral category does John connect with sin?

Sin of Omission

James 4:13–17

What kind of failure can become sin here?

How does this expand a definition focused only on prohibited actions?

Conscience and Faith

Romans 14:13–23

What is the immediate context of “whatever is not from faith is sin”?

How does acting against conscience become morally relevant?

2 Corinthians 5:21

What does the verse say about Yeshua’s own sinlessness?

What case can be made for sacrificial/sin-offering background?

What prevents us from saying the noun itself automatically means “sin offering” here?

Hebrews 9–10

What relationships do you see among sin, sacrifice, conscience, cleansing, access, and forgiveness?

Test the Claims

“Hamartia literally means missing the mark.”

What is true?

What is overstated?

"Romans 3:23 proves hamartia means fall short."

"Every mistake is sin."

"Only deliberate rebellion is sin."

"Sin is only individual acts."

"If Sin is a power, individuals are not responsible."

"1 John 3:4 means hamartia and anomia are identical Greek words."

"2 Corinthians 5:21 definitely means sin offering."

Test the Torah-Observant Shortcut

What passages strongly connect Torah and knowledge of sin?

Why is "hamartia = Torahlessness" too strong as a lexical claim?

How does Torah itself distinguish unintentional sin from defiant rebellion?

What additional New Covenant context must be considered when defining righteousness after Messiah?

Build Your Definition

Complete each sentence.

The older Greek word family can include:

In the Septuagint and New Testament, hamartia most commonly names:

Romans 5–7 show that Sin can also function as:

1 John connects sin with:

James shows sin can include:

The “missing the mark” illustration is useful when:

It becomes misleading when:

My Final Working Definition

Personal Reflection

Which part of this study corrected or sharpened your previous definition?

Do you tend to minimize sin or make every human error into sin? What would biblical precision change?

What does the seriousness of sin teach you about the greatness of grace?

Is there a known good you have been refusing to do?

Is there a pattern you have been calling a “mistake” that Scripture calls you to confess and turn from?

Final Evidence Map

WORD FAMILY

miss / fail / err / do wrong / sin — context decides.

INDIVIDUAL WRONGS

sins can be committed, confessed, forgiven, and cleansed.

GUILT / CONDITION

humanity can be described as under sin.

RULING POWER

Romans 5–7 portrays Sin as entering, reigning, enslaving, deceiving, and killing.

LAWLESSNESS / UNRIGHTEOUSNESS

1 John connects sin with anomia and adikia without making the lexemes identical.

OMISSION / CONSCIENCE

James 4 and Romans 14 show that known good and faithful conscience matter.

SACRIFICIAL CONTEXT

Septuagint patterns inform Romans 8:3 and may illuminate 2 Corinthians 5:21, but the noun alone does not settle translation.

Prayer + Application

Yehovah, teach me to call sin what You call sin without making Your Word harsher or softer than You have made it. Give me a tender conscience without fearfulness, conviction without despair, and repentance without excuses. Thank You for Yeshua, who does more than improve my aim—He forgives, cleanses, reconciles, and breaks sin's mastery. Teach me to walk by Your Spirit in freedom and obedience. Amen.

Notes
