

*The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, **forgiving iniquity** and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.*” Exodus 34:6-7

OPEN

- When you see someone messing up, do you tend to try to fix their mistake immediately or do you tend to let them figure it out?

DISCOVER

Read Exodus 34:6-7.

The Hebrew word translated ‘iniquity’ is **avon** which can also be translated as ‘wickedness’ or ‘guilt’ or ‘sin.’ The related Hebrew verb **avah** means to be bent or crooked.

What do the following verses add to your understanding of **avon/avah**?ⁱ

- Psalm 38:6
- Lamentations 3:9
- Jeremiah 3:21
- Job 33:27ⁱⁱ

The main way the LORD responds to human **avon** is to let people experience the crooked consequences of their choices. The Hebrew phrase “bear your iniquity” literally means “to carry your **avon**.”

Read Numbers 14:26-35

- How did Israel sin against the LORD? How does the punishment reflect the sin?
- What are the benefits of making Israel bear her iniquity?ⁱⁱⁱ

DEEPEN

There is another way the LORD responds to human **avon**. The most common Hebrew phrase for God’s forgiveness is “carrying **avon**.”

Read Psalm 32:1-5.

- How does the Psalmist experience his **avon**?
- How does the Psalmist deal with his **avon**?
- How does the forgiveness fit the crime?^{iv}

Read Isaiah 53:4-5.

- Isaiah tells us of a Servant who will bear our griefs and carry our sorrows. What happens to the one who carries our **avon**?

Read 1 Peter 2:24.

- Peter identifies Jesus as the Servant who bears our sins. What is the fruit of Jesus bearing our iniquity?^v

SO WHAT?^{vi}

- Why might some people today not feel the weight of their iniquity?^{vii}
- What does it look like when someone is weighed down by iniquity?^{viii}
- What would you tell a friend who says, “I know the LORD forgives me, but I still feel the weight of guilt for what I did”?

