

## Anatomy of Iniquity

Two words are used in the O.T. to describe how iniquity is formed: *aven* and *awon*.

Hebrew writers sometimes employed sound-play (*paronomasia*) with similar words to deepen meaning, and these two terms overlap in their descriptions of evil and iniquity.

- Both share **נ** (waw–nun), which carries the sense of :  
**possibility** → **outcome** (like a seed's growth into results).
- The **first letter** in each Hebrew word is decisive:
  - *aven* : aleph (**א**) makes it about **emptiness/futility** (unfulfilled strength).
  - *awon*: ayin (**ע**) (elder/seventy) makes it about how unfulfilled purpose becomes crooked perception → emotional reaction/ twisted action.

### 1. **אָוֵן** ( *'āwen/aven* )

The root conveys nothingness/potential (root *on* – beginnings/firstborn inheritance) that leads to either development or ruin.

This is why *'āwen* comes to mean **emptiness, futility, vanity, idolatry** — an internal force that indicates purpose and potential power but is essentially hollow until developed.

Consider how Bethel became known as Beth-Aven (Hosea 10:5), Jeroboam, or simply Aven:

Hosea 10:8 The high places also of Aven, the sin of Israel, shall be destroyed: the thorn and the thistle shall come up on their altars; and they shall say to the mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, fall on us.

How did Bethel (originally Luz – almond tree) become Aven?

- Jacob – ladder from Elohim to Yahweh
- Jacob wrestled and then “limped” with a new name: Israel

Hosea 12: 3 He (Jacob) took his brother by the heel in the womb, and by his strength (*on*) he had power (*sara*) with God: 4 Yea, he had power (*sur*) over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him: he found him in Bethel, and there he spake with us;

Behemoth – Job 40: 16 Lo now, his strength (*koah*) is in his loins, and his force (*on*) is in the navel of his belly.

This is how God moves in us. He creates us with an identity/purpose; it seems as though it is nothing, but it must be developed in Him. The enemy will attempt to pervert this calling and use it for his own purposes or to exert a destructive influence.

At each point of significant development in our walk, God brings us back to this core identity/emptiness for growth and promotion to evolve.

- Moses staff versus speak
- Elijah/Elisha

## 2. אָוֹן ( 'āwōn) – primarily translated as iniquity

- **Root letters:** ע-ו-א (Ayin–Waw–Nun)
- **Ayin (ע):** Eye, perception, twistedness, something seen but distorted.
- **Waw (ו):** Connection, continuation.
- **Nun (נ):** Life, seed, continuation, or decay.
  
- Think of it as: “*a distorted vision (ayin) that leads life/purpose (nun) astray.*”
- The opposite of this is when a person follows the purpose of God for their life and becomes someone of experience and authority in God.
- This explains why 'āwōn equals iniquity (unfulfilled and twisted purpose) and perversity.

Two examples of where אָוֶן ( 'āwen) and אָוֹן ( 'āwōn) show up in proximity within the O.T.

Job 15:34–35 The company of the godless is barren, and fire consumes the tents of bribery. They conceive trouble ( 'āwen) and give birth to iniquity ( 'āwōn); their womb prepares deceit.

✨ This is the clearest example where both words appear together in deliberate parallelism:

- 'āwen = trouble/emptiness conceived.
- 'āwōn = iniquity birthed from it.

The point: it begins as emptiness (*awen*), but matures into full iniquity (*awon*).

Psalm 55:3 Because of the voice of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked ( 'āwen); for they bring down trouble upon me, and in anger they bear a grudge ( 'āwōn).”

Here again, *awen* =emptiness, *awon* =iniquity.

The pattern becomes clearer when both words appear together:

- אָוֶן (*awen*) = *the empty, worthless wickedness (seed stage)*.
- אָוֹן (*awon*) = *the twisted, crooked iniquity (fruit stage)*.