Title: The meaning of ‘anaw in Numbers 12:3

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Abstract:

Num 12:3 poses a problem among Bible scholars searching for some solution. Moses is said to be ‘anaw in Num 12:3. The KJV translates ‘anaw into “meek”: “(Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men who were upon the face of the earth).” Some scholars say that the translation “meek” or “humble” for the Hebrew word ‘anaw in Num 12:3 was added during the Hellenistic period.

Chapter two provides the background of Num 12:3. It contains the structure of the book of Numbers, a picture of what is happening behind Num 12:3, and an overview of the life of Moses which relates to Num 12:3.

Chapter three presents a word study and an exegesis of Num 12:3. ‘anaw in Num 12:3 has multiple meanings such as afflicted, humble, seeking God, long suffering. However, out of the multiple translations, “humble” is better to portray ‘anaw in Num 12:3. Also, Num 12:3 is important to explain why Moses did justify himself when his sister Miriam and brother Aaron questioned his authority as God’s spokesman.

Chapter four is a conclusion to the research. The word study of ‘anaw may mean “humble” like all the six cases in the feminine singular form, and a few cases (Ps 25:9; 37:11; Prov 16:29; Zeph 2:3) in the masculine plural form of ‘nawim. From this study, we may say that the Hebrew word ‘anaw had the meaning “humble” from the time before the Hellenistic period.
Also from the texts of similar expression, we know that the expressions in Num 12:3 could be as old as the other texts in Numbers 12. That is before the Hellenistic period. Thus I find no support for the historical-critical scholars’ opinion that ‘anaw means “meek” or “humble” only by the influence of the Greek word praus in the Hellenistic period.