

Title – The Lord Gives Grace to the Humble: עָנָה in the Narratives of Genesis

Program of Study – Masters of Divinity in Biblical Studies

Presentation Type – PowerPoint

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Abstract: This presentation evaluates the early revelation of God’s sanctifying work in his people by analyzing the affliction of four characters: Hagar (Gen 16), Leah (Gen 29–30), Jacob (Gen 29–33) and Joseph (Gen 37–50). While the afflictions are not new to Biblical scholars, few have evaluated the shared linguistic and narrational elements of each narrative. These links underscore a pattern of God refining his people through trial, showing that he made this known to his people since the establishment of the covenantal relationship, not as something new promised in the New Testament. In order to establish the pattern, this presentation first overviews each narrative by addressing four main narrational elements: victim, oppressor, reason, and resolution. Specific attention is paid to the language of human affliction (עָנָה), and God hearing (שָׁמַע) or seeing (רָאָה) the victim. After evaluating each narrative, they are then compared and contrasted, which reveals a narrational connection, and ultimately a theological pattern. These literary relationships emphasize that from the beginning of God’s covenant, he desired for his people to grow in faith and spiritual fervor through experiencing affliction. From the affliction that he allows, he guides his people back to him by a way that leads them to further dependence on him. The importance of this theological motif in the Torah is supported by the reoccurrence of the motif in Exodus 3. This analysis concludes that although sanctification

through trials appears as a common theme in the New Testament, this theme is originated in Genesis, revealing that God sought the purification of his people through undeserved trials since the inception of the Abrahamic covenant. Further research may find fruit in tracing this theme and its linguistic collocation from these Genesis narratives into the rest of the Old Testament and even into the New.