hand, the author knew that his laws were written after Moses’ time; on the other, he wanted to word the verse so as to refer to an un-witting sin against all the laws (which are usually attributed to Moses). So in trying to achieve both, he did not notice that his wording of the verse exposed him by showing that his writings consist principally of laws which are not Mosaic.

If this interpretation is correct, then we can consider Num. xv 22-23 as evidence (like the well-known Gen. xii 6 and other instances noticed already at the beginning of Biblical scholarship) that even according to the Biblical sources themselves, at least part of the legal material included in the Pentateuch is not Mosaic.

Tel-Aviv

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3) B. Baentsch, Numeri (Göttingen, 1903), pp. 536-7, deals with the question what “all these commendments” (v. 22) are. Do they refer to vv. 1-21 or not? Baentsch says that the time mentioned is the period in which the laws were given to the people and onwards. Compare also C. F. Keil, Biblischer Commentar über das Alte Testament I. 2 (Leipzig, 1862), pp. 251-2, E. tr. Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament 3 (Edinburgh, 1865), pp. 101-2. According to Keil, the verses speak about the neglect of all the laws. Compare also M. Noth, Das vierte Buch Mose. Numeri (Göttingen, 1966), pp. 102-3, E. tr. Numbers (London, 1968), p. 116.
4) See also J. H. Greenstone, Numbers (Philadelphia, 1939), p. 159.
5) See also Abarbanel, Commentary.

VERB MODALITY AND THE INTERPRETATION OF JOB IV 20-21

Modal verbs, like “can”, “do”, “may”, “must”, “ought”, “should”, “would”, express distinctions of mood, such as that between possibility and actuality. Modern European languages use such verbs constantly, whereas in Biblical Hebrew they are virtually non-existent. Gesenius-Kautzsch-Cowley, § 117a, puts the point succinctly: “While the Hebrew verb, owing to [its] derivative forms or conjugations, possesses a certain richness or copiousness, it is, on the other hand, poor in the matter of *tenses and moods*”. Particles relieve the difficulty somewhat, and E. König was able, in his *Historisch-Comparative Vetus Testamentum*, Vol. XXX, Fasc. 3
Syntax der Hebräischen Sprache (Leipzig, 1897) to devote twenty-seven pages to an elaborate classification of modal uses to which the Hebrew verb can be put (pp. 70-97). Nevertheless, except in the case of the jussive, there is no marker of modality in the verb-form itself (and even so, most jussives are identical with “imperfect” forms). The chief criterion for determining the modality of a verb must be the context. Yet since the signs of modality in the Hebrew verb are usually absent, translators and commentators are not always alert enough to the possibility of a modal understanding of a verb; hence the context may not be allowed to determine the nuance of the verb, and worse, the failure to establish the modality of the verb may distort the interpretation of the context.

Job iv 20-21 may be a case in point. Translators and commentators alike assume, though their interpretations take somewhat different forms, that Eliphaz is describing the fate of mankind in general:

\[
\text{mibbōger lä'ereb yuikkattū mibb̄eli mētim lāneḥah yōbēdā hēlō' nissa' yitrām bām yāmūtū wēlō' bēḥokmā.}
\]

Betwixt morning and evening they are destroyed:
Their lives are cut off without any regarding it.
Is not their tent-cord plucked up within them?
They die, and that without wisdom. (Revised Version)

Thus on \text{mibbōger lä'ereb} H. H. Rowley commented, “man is ephemeral, and his life is swiftly done” ¹, and G. Fohrer, “Das Leben ist wie ein einziger Tageslauf gedacht, der Mensch wie ein Eintagsgeschöpf” ²). Or on \text{wēlō' bēḥokmā}, A. S. Peake remarked, “man is so constituted that as he lives so he dies without attaining wisdom” ³), and S. R. Driver, “Eliphaz has pointed out the physical imperfections of human nature; here he reverts to the point... of its moral imperfection; men die without having attained wisdom, i.e. without having realized the moral limitations of human nature” ⁴). The comment of M. H. Pope is typical: “Man as a finite and ephemeral creature of clay... scarcely lives long enough to acquire wisdom” ⁵).

Now if Eliphaz were speaking of the fate of the wicked, as Elihu is in xxxvi 12 with very similar language (they perish \text{kiḇōli-dā'at} or \text{kiḇōli-dā'at}), or as Zophar in xx 8 (they fly away like a dream and cannot be found), his claim would be intelligible. But he has been speaking of mankind generally, that is of man by comparison with the heavenly beings (iv 18) and with God himself (iv 17). Can it be that Eliphaz’s rhetoric has led him beyond his intention? Can he,