

Abraham Ibn Ezra on the Torah's Authorship

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Abstract : Critical biblical scholarship emerged in the early modern period, yet scholars frequently search for precursors to it among medieval commentators who adopted critical positions—and many mention Abraham Ibn Ezra (Spain-England, 1089-1164/7) in this context. Indeed, in several places, Ibn Ezra claims that there are verses in the Torah that were added to it after the time of Moses; and some major thinkers and scholars in the early modern period (for example, Baruch Spinoza) were aware of these remarks and influenced by them. However, Ibn Ezra's belief that the Torah includes verses added at a later time is not based on the considerations that led the founders of critical biblical scholarship to their conclusion that Moses did not write the Torah. Ibn Ezra's positions on the question of the Torah's authorship are an example of the fact that similarity in conclusions and even in interpretive methodology should not obscure the different interpretive and attitudinal points of departure that distinguish traditional biblical interpretation from a critical biblical scholarship. Ultimately, a chasm exists between the views of Ibn Ezra and those of critical thinkers such as Spinoza.

Keywords : hebrew bible, Abraham Ibn Ezra, exegesis, biblical scholarship

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