

IV. THE HIGHER CRITICISM OF THE PENTATEUCH

A. Early Doubts of the Mosaic Authorship of the whole Pentateuch or parts of it.

This section would hardly detain us at all were it not for the fact that it is apt to get far more attention among the unscholarly and uneducated than it deserves and therefore we need to be aware of it. The general attitude of the Jewish rabbi was that all but the last eight verses of the Pentateuch were the words of Moses. They tended to think that the last eight verses of the Pentateuch might have been written by Joshua or by someone else.

In the twelfth century there was a noted Jewish rabbi named Ibn Ezra who wrote on many subjects and had great acceptance among the Jews. Ibn Ezra made a very peculiar statement about the Pentateuch. He seems to have held the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch and yet at one place he lists a number of passages: Gen. 12:6, Gen. 22:14, Deut. 1:1, Deut. 3:11, etc., verses which were included in the study you have made in the book by Green. He says that these verses present an insoluble mystery and that the prudent thing to do is to say very little about it. In other words, he says here is an insoluble mystery and then he stops and says, "Let's not go into it." The noted Jewish philosopher Spinoza, a Pantheist who lived from 1632 to 1677, five hundred years after Ibn Ezra, declared that these words of Ibn Ezra show that Ibn Ezra did not believe that Moses wrote the Pentateuch. Many interpreters disagree with Spinoza. They say that in other passages Ibn Ezra shows clearly that he does believe in the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. Spinoza said if Ibn Ezra did not believe in the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, what he meant by these statements was that Moses could not have said "the Canaanite was then in the land." What would be the sense of Moses making a statement like that? Moses would not have said that "it is there in this day," or have made these other statements. Therefore, Spinoza said the Pentateuch was not written by Moses.

Then Spinoza added other arguments. The Bible says that Moses