“The Secret Halfway Through the Book”: Abraham Ibn Ezra’s Approach to the Composition of the Book of Isaiah, its Sources and Conclusions.

Avraham Ibn Ezra (1089 – ~1164, Spain and Christian Europe) enigmatically suggests that the book of Isaiah consists of the prophecies of two different prophets who were active in different periods – Isaiah ben Amotz (chapters 1-39), and an anonymous prophet who lived in the Second Temple period (from chapter forty onwards). On this point, Ibn Ezra anticipates critical biblical scholarship by centuries, although his considerations for reaching this conclusion differ from those of modern biblical scholars. In my lecture, I will clarify Ibn Ezra's position against the backdrop of his views on the authorship of other books of the Hebrew Bible and the traditional Jewish approach to these issues of authorship and composition.

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In this course, we will examine the place of the Hebrew Bible in the Jewish culture of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century. We will trace how the Hebrew Bible is explicitly and implicitly embodied in literature, poetry, film, and music, and we will highlight its significant place in social, political, religious, and academic discourse. As will become clear, it is impossible to underestimate the formative influence of the Bible on our lives, while noting that the Bible’s impact is marked by great dynamism as it is transformed in consonance with the challenges of the changing times.