**“For He Creates *Ex nihilo*”**

**The Meaning of Creation *Ex nihilo* in the Teachings of Rabbis Isaac Israeli and Solomon ibn Gabirol**

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Rabbis Isaac Israeli and Solomon ibn Gabirol, the two great Neoplatonic Jewish thinkers, both emphasized belief in Creation *ex nihilo* many times in their works. Concurrently, both also advanced the Neoplatonic idea of emanation. On the face of it, the two beliefs are mutually exclusive.

The common understanding of Creation *ex nihilo* is that God creates reality as He wills it, out of nothing and temporally. Conversely, the idea of emanation suggests that reality emanates by necessity from the essence of the Deity and does so timelessly.

Naturally, scholars have asked how these thinkers integrated their belief in Creation *ex nihilo* with their commitment to the doctrine of emanation.

Among the scholars who have taken up the issue are Alexander Altmann, Harry Wolfson, Jacques Schlanger, and recently, Sarah Pessin. These scholars offer different approaches that address how Israeli and Ibn Gabirol integrated the idea of Creation *ex nihilo* with the idea of emanation. Alongside this discussion, the question of the relationship between the two Jewish Neoplatonic thinkers was addressed.

In my lecture, I wish to reexamine the relation between created reality and the Deity in the work of these two Jewish philosophers. I will try to show that both thinkers proposed a unique fusion of belief in Creation *ex nihilo* and emanation—one in which they offer new interpretations of both. I will also argue that this fusion reflects the deep connection between the works of these two thinkers.