

Foreword of the editors in light of the events of October 7, 2023

On October 7, while we were completing the process of proofreading this book, hundreds of Hamas terrorists invaded Israel and brutally murdered more than 1,300 people, most of them citizens, and took hostage more than 200, among them babies, children, and elderly men and women. In the eyes of many, the inhuman attack presents the most radical crisis and rupture to the state of Israel and the Jewish people since the Holocaust. At the time we write these sentences, Israel is still in mourning, and the consequences of the horrible tragedy and crisis are far from being clear. Nevertheless, it is already evident that the events in the morning of Simchat Torah are leading and will lead to paradigmatic and unforeseeable changes in the way we think about Jewish existence in the land of Israel, the relations between Israeli Jews and Palestinians, and the ties between Israel and the Jewish diasporas.

The various chapters, which examine from different perspectives the question of crisis in Jewish thought, were written months before the attack. Therefore, they are grounded in a different reality, one that could not foresee the current crisis and its consequences. We can safely assume that if this book had been written today or after the war in Gaza/Israel, many of its chapters would have been written differently. Moreover, we are convinced that his book will be read differently now and hope it can offer philosophical, theological, and historical frameworks that might also be relevant for current days.

Although this book places the question of crisis in Jewish thought at its center, it is situated in an Israeli context: The conference from which the book emerges took place at the University of Haifa, an institution known for gathering both Jewish and Arab students from the Israeli north. In addition, many of the contributors to this volume are Israelis, while others have close ties to Israel, its people, and its academic community. We wish to devote this book to the October 7 victims. May the tragedy of their families and friends will not be in vain.

Ghilad H. Shenhav, Cedric Cohen-Skalli, and Gilad Sharvit, October 25, 2023

