

Introduction

Bamidbar is a new journal for Jewish Thought and Philosophy. It takes its name from the Biblical experience of exodus “in the desert,” the opening line and the theme of the Book of Numbers that gave the fourth book of the Pentateuch its Hebrew name. *Bamidbar* is also a crucially formative moment that foregrounds and frames the narrative of Jewish history and has become a constitutive part of Western historical narratives. *In the wilderness, in exile, and on the way*, *Bamidbar* signals the explorative, searching trajectory of exilic experience. Critically constitutive, exile and diaspora figure as grounding context for Jewish philosophers.

Currently, there is no place where European Jewish philosophers can explore and debate questions and issues central to both Jewish concerns and to philosophy. *Bamidbar* seeks to address that lack. The journal is meant to serve as a critical forum for open discussion. The group will participate in international conferences, in and outside of Europe. *Bamidbar* also organizes an annual workshop.

The editors’ agenda is to take as broad an intellectual and cultural stand as possible to create a forum beyond the existing venues that represent the perspectives of the American and Israeli centered discussion. To leave a Eurocentric approach behind, the editors argue for the need to take the European branch of Jewish thought seriously on its own terms and in its particular historical specificity. American and Israeli centered discussions continue to remain deeply informed by a European genealogy they often deny where they are most dependent. The editors understand that in order to break free from, and critically respond to the problem of Eurocentric fixation the problem cannot be dodged but must receive critical attention. *Bamidbar* seeks to recover a European tradition of philosophical critique that has consistently and often with rigorous verve articulated a challenge to imposed Eurocentric protocols. To break the spell of such received fixations, *Bamidbar* intends to critically reconnect – by giving them renewed attention – to the complexly situated constellations in which that critique emerges, as it were, from an outside within.

Exploring the rich experience of Jewish philosophers in modernity with an eye to the specificity of their complexly woven historical contexts holds the promise of a liberating impulse in philosophic critique. Rethinking the projects and trajectories of Jewish philosophers presents the possibility of recovering creative responses to the claim to a monolithic, homogenous Europe as a received fiction of a reality that never existed. The spell of Eurocentric claims, in other words, is broken once Europe's own but suppressed creative openness, its internal difference, is brought to critical attention as that other Europe, the Europe whose recognition remains threatened by the forgetfulness of a universalism that has become oblivious of its own critical roots and the multiplicity of its creative origins.

This inaugural issue brings together essays by the editors and one of the managing editors. It is meant to highlight in practice, our programmatic statement of the purpose of *Bamidbar*. Reflecting different styles and approaches to the shared project of rethinking contemporary philosophy from the different perspectives of Jewish concerns, the essays argue for dialogue as a moment critical to the creative movement of philosophy, Jewish or not. Most important, and we hope most liberating, is that they argue for the need to continue rethinking the parameters of what we do as philosophers as the very necessity of our projects. To move, open up the discourse, and renegotiate these parameters is what after all constitutes the critical moment of philosophy. We invite the readers to join our project and participate in this discussion.

Our standpoint is that we do need a stand to move, not to rest on. The journal will have both special theme issues and open issues. With the launching of the journal, there will be a standing call for papers. Editors may also invite guest editors for special theme issues. Editorial policy is that all submissions are read and discussed by the team of editors and are peer reviewed. While most issues will consist of 96 pages, priority is given to content. Individual issues may therefore occasionally vary in length. The sum of each volume consisting of two issues per year, however, will total 192 pages. The inaugural issue exceeds the page limit for obvious reasons, as the editors present different aspects, concerns, and approaches of the vision they share.

For the editors,

Willi Goetschel

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