

# Where to Begin: Möbius Torah 1.0

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## Möbius Torah Directions:

1. Print this page out on Ledger (11x17) sized paper. This will ensure it is big enough to read.
2. Cut out the table below.
3. Fold along the dotted line with the writing facing outwards.
4. Bend Paper into a circular shaped cuff.
5. Tape the ends to create a möbius strip as in this picture to the right.
6. As you learn it turn it and turn it again because there is no beginning and no end to learning Torah.
7. Alternatively you can just learn the text without the arts and crafts project, but that would not be as much fun.



## Gmar Chatima Tova

<p>WHERE TO BEGIN?</p> <p>Seven things were created even before the world was created: Torah and <i>Teshuva</i> (repentance), the Garden of Eden, <i>Gehenom</i>, God's Throne of Honor, the Temple, and the name of the Messiah. (Pesachim 54a &amp; Nedarim 39b)</p> <p>What are the implications of anything being created before creation? When does creation actually begin?</p> <p>Seemingly these 7 things are necessary components for the world to come into existence.</p> <p>What is the quality of <i>Teshuva</i> that it is considered or portrayed as a necessary component for the creation of the world?</p> <p>Is the preexistence of <i>Teshuva</i> indicate an optimistic or pessimistic imagination of humanity?</p>	<p>WHERE TO BEGIN?</p> <p><i>Hayom Harat Olam</i>- Today is the day of the world's birth. Today all creation is called to judgment, whether as Your children or as Your servants. If as Your children, be compassionate with us as a parent is compassionate with children. ( Rosh HaShana Machzor)</p> <p>If the world was born on Rosh HaShana, does that mean that Rosh HaShana is the beginning?</p> <p>Rabbi David Seidenberg suggests that <i>Harat</i> does not mean birth as it is commonly translated but rather conception or pregnancy.</p> <p>What might it mean that Rosh HaShana is the start of the process which leads up to birth of the world?</p> <p><i>Olam</i> by itself does not mean world, but rather eternity, from the root that means "hidden" that is beyond our limited perception. In this sense Rosh HaShana is pregnant with eternity, or eternally pregnant.</p>	<p>WHERE TO BEGIN?</p> <p>There are four "new years"; On the first of Nisan, the new year for the kings and for the festivals; On the first of Elul, the new year for the tithing of animals; Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Shimon say, on the first of Tishrei. On the first of Tishrei, the new year for years, for the Sabbatical years and for the Jubilee years and for the planting and for the vegetables. On the first of Shevat, the new year for the trees according to the words of the House of Shammai; The House of Hillel says, on the fifteenth thereof. ( Mishna Rosh HaShana 1:1)</p> <p>The Mishna expresses and plays with question of when to begin by offering four different answers and ways to begin.</p> <p>In what ways do the examples offered by the mishna describe or prescribe beginnings?</p> <p>Write your own opening mishna depicting your four ideas or hopes necessary for new beginnings.</p>	<p>WHERE TO BEGIN?</p> <p><i>Shmuel went from year to year in circuit to Bet-El, the Gilgal and Mizpe, and Judged Israel in all those places. And his return was to Rama for there was his home, and there he judged Israel and there he built an altar to the Lord.</i> ( Shmuel 1 7:15-17 )</p> <p>Rav Soloveitchik z"l in <u>On Repentance</u> depict Shmuel's circuit and return home as the paradigm of <i>Teshuva</i>. According to the Rav <i>Teshuva</i> is essential an act of circular returning. No matter how far we go away, like Shmuel traveling in a circle, we are always going back and returning home. Sometimes the circumference may be very wide, but none the less the direction is back to the beginning point.</p> <p>Is it true, are we on a constant circular journey home?</p> <p>Is this circuit caused by or a cause of this return? Is this why <i>Teshuva</i> is a necessary component for the creation of the world?</p>
<p>RETURN AGAIN</p>	<p>RETURN AGAIN</p>	<p>RETURN AGAIN</p>	<p>RETURN AGAIN</p>
<p>WHERE TO BEGIN?</p> <p>Rashi's first comment of the Torah quotes Rabbi Isaac who posits: It was not necessary to begin the Torah except from "This month is to you," (Exodus 12:2) which is the first commandment that the Israelites [as a nation] were commanded. Now for what reason did God start with "<i>Bersheit</i>- In the beginning?" ( Rashi on Genesis 1:1)</p> <p>Rabbi Isaac suggests that we should not begin with the story of creation of Adam, but instead the story of the creation of a people with their fashioning of their own calendar.</p> <p>How do we balance the role of the personal vs. collective regarding when to the begin the story?</p> <p>What is more central to our story, an imperative for the future or a narrative about the past?</p> <p>Which is more central to the question of beginning, where regarding space or when regarding time?</p>	<p>WHERE TO BEGIN?</p> <p>20th Century French philosopher Paul Ricoeur called the act of taking something that is old and broken and seeing it anew and reborn having 2<sup>nd</sup> Naïveté. We accept that the narratives we held as truth at first are myths, but having passed through a critical distance, we begin to re-engage these concepts at a different level. No longer accepting them at face value, as presented by religious authorities, we interpret them for ourselves anew.</p> <p>In his <u>Sacred Fragments</u> Rabbi Neil Gillman points out that the broken first tablets and the second tablets were both put in the Ark of the Covenant. This is a model for a new/old beginning. Even when things are broken we can always start again.</p> <p>As a writing project build your own Ark. Place in it the ideas you once held as pristine and true and consider how they broke, your new myths, and how you make meaning of these sacred fragments.</p>	<p>WHERE TO BEGIN?</p> <p><i>Each and every Jew must believe with complete faith that with each and every moment, he receives a new life force from God. God did not just create the world and then leave it. Every moment, God is recreating and re infusing it with energy and if God would stop for one moment, the word would cease to exist. God did not just create me and then leave me. Every moment, God is re infusing me with life. With breath. If God would stop for one moment, I would cease to exist.</i> ( Kedushat Levi on Midrash Eichah)</p> <p>According to Rabbi Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev every moment is full of creative possibilities. Creation is never ending and always beginning. It is circular in the purest sense.</p> <p>If it is always being recreated, when is the beginning?</p> <p>Does God need us to recognize God's creation for it to be recreated?</p>	<p>WHERE TO BEGIN?</p> <p>Ben Bag Bag would say: <i>hafuch bah v hafuch bah, d'kulah bah</i>- Delve into it and delve into it, for all is in it; see with it; grow old and worn in it; do not budge from it, for there is nothing better. ( Avot 5:21)</p> <p><b>hafuch bah</b>- Meaning delve also means search, or even turn over. With the turning of this very page this simple source sheet has become a möbius strip with no beginning and no end.</p> <p>The question is not where to start, but do we find everything in it?</p> <p>Torah is a very special pursuit. Regardless of our age when we engage in learning we can rewrite our narratives and return to the naïveté of when we learned Torah for the first time. Similarly perhaps <i>Teshuva</i> is portal out of our linear world into a circular one enabling us to defy time and destiny.</p> <p>How might Torah and <i>Teshuva</i> both be necessary components for the creation of the world.</p>
<p>RETURN AGAIN</p>	<p>RETURN AGAIN</p>	<p>RETURN AGAIN</p>	<p>RETURN AGAIN</p>