

Today is the Birthday of the World

By Linda Heller

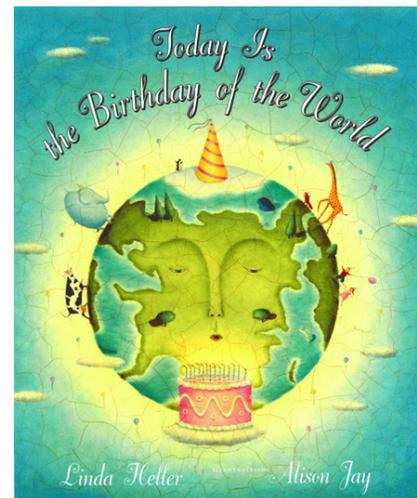
Illustrated by Alison Jay

Program Focus

Age group: Ages 3-8

Time frame: 45-75 minutes

Central value: Peeking ahead to the New Year and striving to be the best one can be



Please note that that this program can be run on its own, or in combination with the book-based program for *The Shalom Sesame DVD "The Sticky Shofar"*.

Synopsis

Featuring quiet repetitive language and serene illustrations, *Today is the Birthday of the World* introduces readers to the concept of Rosh Hashanah as a time for reflecting upon and improving one's behaviors. In this calm reassuring picture book, God approaches each of God's creations, and asks whether, over the course of the past year, each has been the best which he/she could be. As God describes the various actions which each creature should have performed on a daily basis, the reader begins to acquire a clearer understanding of how each creature can help to enhance the beauty and wonder of the world. The text suggests, for example, that it is elephant's job to clear the road, and it is the cow's job to provide milk for the children. The young child, according to the book, has numerous responsibilities for caring for the world, including: planting a garden, decorating the world with beautiful drawings and sharing toys. By performing these acts of *tikkun olam*, the creatures of the world help to make the world the best it can be, and this, according to God, is the best birthday present which the world can receive.

Goals

This program introduces families to the concepts of Rosh Hashanah as a time for:

- Celebrating the creation of the world
- Resolving to help both the earth and its inhabitants in the upcoming year

The program gently demonstrates that Rosh Hashanah marks a perfect time for families to think about how they, as a family, might help to make the world a kinder, more caring and environmentally friendly place. During the course of the program, families will:

- Explore the book *Today is the Birthday of the World*, through a Story Walk™- a unique reading experience in which families walk from one page of a book to the next.
- Engage in a variety of environmentally friendly behaviors (planting flowers, cleaning road, etc.)
- Jot down several “New Year’s Resolutions” on how the family will try to help both people and the earth in the year ahead
- Create arts and crafts projects which will enhance their Rosh Hashanah celebrations

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Plan in advance

Choose Location

Find (and reserve) a location for the Story Walk™.

- Outdoor location options include: nature reserve, park with hiking trails, large field, etc.
- Indoor location: simply limit the amount of physical exercise the program can promote.

Prepare Pages for Story Walk™

Materials

- 2-3 copies of *Today is the Birthday of the World*
- Access to a laminating machine and/or card stock or poster board and glue or glue sticks
- Wooden stakes
- Duct tape
- Number cards or sharpie markers for writing numbers on each stake

Preparations

- Gently separate the pages of the book and tape together so they appear as a double spread
- Choose which animals/pages to include. Not all pages need to be included. (You may want to consider omitting the beaver and fish page-since these will not work as double spreads, and other pages if you are concerned about the length of the walk.)
- Laminate pages or attach selected double spreads to poster board backings.
- Attach double spread pictures to wooden stakes, using duct tape.
- Place numbers underneath each spread so families will read the pages in the proper order.
- Outside location: place stakes into the ground at intervals following the selected nature trail
- Inside location: tape pictures to the walls /hallways of the building

Prepare Story Walk™ Station Activities

If you choose to include activities in your Story Walk™ be sure to post written instructions providing step by step directions for the activity and noting how the activity connects to the book. Sample instructions are included below.

Introduce the activity

Story Walk™ Explanation

Today you will be going on a very special Story Walk™. On a Story Walk™, we read a book, not by turning the pages of the book, but by walking from one page of a book to the next. Each time you come to a new page, a member of your family will pause and read that page aloud.

Introduce the Story

The book that we're reading today is called *Today is the Birthday of the World*. As you walk and read, you will meet many animals and people who have been very busy taking care of the world. As you travel from page to page, we will occasionally ask you to try to perform some of the same activities which are described in the pages of the book. Today, each time that you perform an activity which helps the world, in some way, you can shout, "Happy Birthday World".

Did you know that just like the world which is pictured in our book, our world will be celebrating a birthday in just a few short days/weeks? The Jewish Holiday of Rosh Hashanah celebrates the birthday/creation of the world. Every Rosh Hashanah, the world turns one year older. On Rosh Hashanah, we say "Happy Birthday" to the world by singing songs, lighting candles, eating special foods, and blowing a very special type of birthday horn called a shofar. As you'll discover on your Story Walk™, on Rosh Hashanah we give birthday presents to the world by making promises about how we will help take care of the world in the upcoming year. Are you ready to begin your Story Walk™ and learn about the many different kinds of gifts which we can give the world on its birthday?"



Story Walk™ Stations

Giraffe Page

Measuring Personal Growth

(FROM BOSTON PJ LIBRARY) We have created a measuring stick in the shape of a Giraffe's neck and head. Parents will measure children against the giraffe yard stick using a roll of paper (think old adding machine tape roll). They will mark the giraffe and the paper with their child's name and the date. Table will also include discussion questions for parent and child. How much do you think you have grown this past year? Have you grown in ways other than getting taller? Are there things you can do now that you couldn't do last year? In what ways do you think you will grow in the coming year?

Boy Planting a Garden Page

Option 1: Flower Planting

Materials

- Paper cups
- Flower seeds
- Planting Soil
- Plastic Spoons
- Watering cans or plastic bottles filled with water

Instructions

Can you plant a flower and help beautify the world just like the boy in the book is doing?

Things to do

- Fill the cup one half to three fourths full with soil
- Poke holes in the soil
- Deposit one seed in each hole
- Gently sprinkle dirt on top of the seeds
- Water lightly



Option 2: Transplanting Flowers to Beautify a Patch of Land

Materials

- Small starter plants, purchased from a garden center
- Watering cans or plastic bottles filled with water
- Shovels

Instructions

Like the boy in the book, can you help plant a garden on this plot of land?

Things to do

- Using a shovel, dig a small hole in the ground
- Pick up a small container containing a plant
- Tip the container over

- Gently tap the bottom of the container, until the plant falls into your outstretched hand
- Place the plant in the hole
- Fill the hole in with dirt, so that the plant can stand comfortably upright
- Water the plant

Elephant Page

Clearing the Road

Materials

- Sticks of many different sizes

Instructions

Can you help straighten our Story Walk™ path, just like the elephants in our book?



Things to Do

- Pick up all of the sticks and arrange them in a neat pile
- When you are done, spread the sticks out for the next family to clean

Fish Page

Taking Care of Animals

(FROM BOSTON PJ LIBRARY) We will have an aquarium with gold fish of 3 different varieties at this station. Activity questions to go with observing the tank will include: Can you count all the fish? How many red fish? How many gold fish? How many dark fish? How do you take care of a pet fish? Information on the care of feeding of fish will also be available at this table. Families will be invited to fill out a raffle ticket at this station. The prize will be a gold fish.

Bee Page

Tasting a Sweet New Year

(FROM BOSTON PJ LIBRARY) A local honey maker will be bringing their product to this station. Everyone will be invited to read facts about bees, touch the honeycomb, and taste various types of honey. Signs connecting honey to the holiday of Rosh Hashanah will be on display at this table.

Hanging Picture Page

Beautifying the World through Pictures

Materials Needed

- One large drawing of a map of the world
- 8.5 x 11 in. sheets of paper
- Crayons and/or markers
- Scotch tape or masking tape

Instructions

Can you add beauty to our world by drawing a picture and attaching it to the map?

Things to Do

- Using crayons and/or markers, draw a picture
- If you like, fold your paper in half and draw a birthday card for the world. On the inside of your card please jot down a birthday wish for the world.
- Use a piece of tape to attach it to our picture of the world
- Find and remove your picture at the *end of today's program* to take home.

Earth Page

Working Together

(FROM BOSTON PJ LIBRARY) We will have a large foam puzzle of the earth that parents and children will cooperatively put together. This activity will require that a group work together and will reinforce the importance of the notion that we can all work together to make the world the best it can be. Discussion questions for parents at this station will revolve around reviewing the various parts of the book. Can you remember what the cow did to be the best it could be? Complete versions of the book will be available for parent and child to look at.

Follow Up activities

Discussion Station

Unlike the stations described above, this station is mandatory and should serve as the final stop on the Story Walk™.

Materials

- Sign containing the discussion questions listed below

Instructions

With your family please discuss the following questions:

- Can you remember the names of some of the animals who appeared in our story?
- Do you remember some of the ways in which the animals helped the world?
- What did the boy in the story do to help the world?
- What would you like to do/give to the world as a birthday present?

Recording “Rosh Hashanah Resolutions”

Introductory Remarks

The animals and children in our book were able to find many different ways to help the world. As we read in our book, Rosh Hashanah is the day on which the world celebrates its birthday.



In the year ahead I hope to

help others by:

help the world by:

Rosh Hashanah is the perfect time for thinking about how we can help the world and the people who live in the world. Can you think of some ways to help the world? We're going to give you a special piece of paper on which we'd like you to jot down some of the ways in which you'd like to help others and the world in the year ahead. We hope you'll take this paper home and hang it in your room or on the refrigerator to help you remember some of the caring behaviors you would like to try in the year ahead.

Materials

- Rosh Hashanah Resolution Worksheet (see attachment)
- Pencils, pens, or markers
- Copy of suggestions of activities for helping the world (see attachment)

Directions

Please complete the attached form with your family (Each family may complete their own form, or family members can prepare one form for the entire family).

Making Mini-Shofars

Materials

- Card stock, oak tag, or construction paper
- Crayons
- Sand paper or corrugated cardboard
- Stickers (optional)
- Paper towel/toilet paper tubes
- Wax paper
- Rubber bands

Advanced Preparations

- If using paper towel tubes, cut them in half
- Cut a piece of wax paper large enough to cover one end of the paper towel tube (with a little wax paper hanging over the sides of the tube)
- Place wax paper on one end of tube and secure by placing a rubber band around the tube and wax paper
- Cut out Shofar shapes

Directions

1. Decorate shofar. For texture, place the shofar on top of the sand paper or corrugated cardboard. Rub crayon and observe the patterns which emerge. Add stickers.
2. Using a stapler, attach shofar to paper towel tube.



Shofar Notes

Materials

- Cardboard tube shofars (made in the previous activity)

Introductory Remarks

Did you know that we use a very special "noisemaker" on Rosh Hashanah? It's called a shofar. Can you show me the shofar which you just made/or which you are holding right now. Can you pretend to blow into your

shofar? The blasts or notes of the shofar tell us, “Wake up, pay attention, a new year has started and it’s time for us to think about how we are going to help others and the world in the year to come”. There is a very special way to blow a shofar. We use special notes when we blow. Each note makes a different sound. Shall we learn the sounds which go with each note?

- Tekiah - one long note
- Shevarim - three short notes
- Teruah - 9 very, very short notes.

Resources for parents, teachers, families

Nurturing the Family

After the program, contact families, thanking them for coming to the program and asking them to send in pictures of their family carrying out some of their New Year’s resolutions.

Remember to provide families with schedules and information about the various Rosh Hashana programs which will be held at local synagogues.

Provide families with a few interesting links to learn more about the holiday. Here are some potential links:

[Rosh Hashana 101](#) on *My Jewish Learning*

[Rosh Hashana: What’s it all about?](#) on Kveller.com

[Shofar info](#) on *My Jewish Learning*

[Meaningful Ways to Celebrate the High Holidays](#)

<http://pjlibrary.org/pj-blog/index.php/archives/1612/meaningful-ways-to-celebrate-the-high-holidays/>

[Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur](#)

<http://pjlibrary.org/parents-and-families/reading-tips-and-resources/jewish-holidays/rosh-hashanah.aspx>

[Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur Books for Children](#)

<http://pjlibrary.org/Parents-and-Families/Reading-Tips-and-Resources/Jewish-Holidays/Rosh-Hashanah/Rosh-Hashanah-and-Yom-Kippur-Books-.aspx>

Some Activity Suggestions for the New Year

Suggestions for Helping Others:

- Cleaning up toys without being asked
- Setting the table
- Helping to put clothes in the washer/dryer
- Playing quietly while an adult talks on the phone
- Sweeping the floor
- Calling grandma/grandpa on the telephone once a week (to wish them a "Shabbat Shalom")
- Donating old toys and clothes to Goodwill or another charitable organization

Suggestions for Helping the World:

- Using cloth grocery bags
- Remembering to turn off the lights when leaving a room
- Recycling
- Composting
- Conserving water-not letting the water run during tooth brushing, face washing, etc.
- Planting a garden/butterfly bush
- Cleaning a nearby park
- Using "green" cleaning products (i.e. baking soda on a sponge)



In the year ahead I hope to

help others by:

help the world by:

be the best I can be!