

A Haftara for Martin Luther King Shabbat

Quotes from Dr. King's speeches

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Honoring the anniversary of the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr
-- a man in whom Dr Abraham Joshua Heschel said "we hear a voice like
the voice of the prophets of Israel ... his presence is the hope of
America." -- numbers in parentheses are source quotes (end of document).

We are on the ^ˈmove now

The ^ˈburning of our ^ˈchurches will not deter us

We are on the ^ˈmove now

The ^ˈbombing of our ^ˈhomes will not dissuade us

We are on the ^ˈmove now

The ^ˈbeating and ^ˈkilling of our ^ˈclergymen and young ^ˈpeople
will not divert us. ❖

We are on the ^ˈmove now. Like an ^ˈidea whose ^ˈtime has ^ˈcome,
not even the ^ˈmarching of mighty ^ˈarmies can ^ˈhalt us.

We are ^ˈmoving to the ^ˈland of ^ˈfreedom. ❖(1)

Now the fact that this new age is emerging
reveals something basic about the universe.

It tells us something about the core and heartbeat of the cosmos.

It reminds us that the universe is on the side of justice.

It says to those who struggle for justice:

"You do not struggle alone, but God struggles with you."

This belief that God is on the side of truth and justice

comes down to us from the long tradition of our faith. (2)

I am convinced that the universe

is under the control of a loving purpose,

and that in the struggle for righteousness

man has cosmic companionship.

Behind the harsh appearances of the world there is a benign power. (3)

I refuse to accept the view

that mankind is so tragically bound

to the starless midnight of racism and war

that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood

can never become a reality. ❖

I refuse to accept the cynical notion

that nation after nation

must spiral down a militaristic stairway

into the hell of thermonuclear destruction. ❖

I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love

will have the final word in reality. ❖

This is why right temporarily defeated

is stronger than evil triumphant. ❖

I have the audacity to believe
that peoples everywhere
can have three meals a day for their bodies,
education and culture for their minds,
and dignity, equality, and freedom for their spirits. ♦

I still believe that one day mankind

Will bow down before the altars of God
and be crowned triumphant over war and bloodshed,
and nonviolent redemptive goodwill
will proclaim the rule of the land. ♦

I still believe that we shall overcome. ♦ (4)

We've got some difficult days ahead.

But it doesn't matter with me now.

Because I've been to the mountaintop.

And I don't mind.

Like anybody, I would like to have a long life.

Longevity has its place.

But I'm not concerned about that now.

I just want to do God's will.

And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain.

And I've looked over. And I've seen the promised land.

And I'm happy, tonight.

(start of note)

I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man.

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord. (5)

(1) Speech before the Alabama state capitol building in Montgomery, at the conclusion of the Selma-to-Montgomery march, March 25, 1965; in James M Washington, ed, "A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King Jr" (New York: HarperCollins, 1986), 229.

(2) Address to the First Annual Institute on Non-Violence and Social Change, Montgomery, Alabama, December 1956; in "A Testament of Hope," 141.

(3) "Pilgrimage to Nonviolence," in "Strength to Love" (collection of sermons by Dr King) (Philadelphia: Augsburg Fortress, 1963), 153.

(4) Address upon receiving the Nobel Peace Prize, Oslo, Norway, December 10, 1964; in "A Testament of Hope," 225-26.

(5) Address at the Bishop Charles Mason Temple in Memphis, Tennessee, April 3, 1968 (Dr King's last sermon); in "A Testament of Hope," 286.