

**1**

**“Letter from Birmingham Jail,” 1963 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**

I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. We can never forget that everything Hitler did in Germany was “legal” and everything the Hungarian freedom fighters did in Hungary was “illegal.” It was “illegal” to aid and comfort a Jew in Hitler’s Germany. But I am sure that, if I had lived in Germany during that time, I would have aided and comforted my Jewish brothers even though it was illegal. If I lived in a [totalitarian] country today where certain principles dear to [our religious] faith are suppressed, I believe I would openly advocate disobeying these anti-religious laws.

When justice burns within us like a flaming fire, when love evokes willing sacrifice from us, when, to the last full measure of selfless devotion, we demonstrate our belief in the ultimate triumph of truth and righteousness, then Your goodness enters our lives, then You live within our hearts, and we through righteousness behold Your presence.

**2**

**Martin Luther King, Jr.**

By Dr. Tarece Johnson

Celebrate the legacy of  
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.  
and other individuals  
and communities  
who joined together  
to pursue justice.  
May we continue to collectively play  
an active role in repairing our world  
by standing up for truth  
serving others  
and demonstrating powerful love.  
*Shabbat Shalom*

## 2020 Women' League Shabbat Readings

3

### **Shemot: The Missing Name**

By Elizabeth Topper

parashapoems.wordpress.com

January 1, 2016

*"These are the names..." (Shemot 1:1)*

Among the rolls  
of worthy names  
hers remains untold:  
the unknown daughter  
of a mighty king,  
who sees a child  
of wretched slaves,  
condemned to certain death.  
She could, unheeded,  
turn aside,  
yet risks her father's wrath  
to swim against the tide  
and save him.  
That child himself,  
once grown,  
can neither turn away,  
nor overlook injustice  
and he too  
intercedes.

## 2020 Women' League Shabbat Readings

4

### **Shemot: Birthing the World**

By Elizabeth Topper

Parashapoems.wordpress.com

January 8, 2015

*And the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shifra and the other Puah. And he said, "When you deliver the Hebrew women, look at the birth-stool: if it is a boy, kill him; if it is a girl, let her live!" But the midwives, fearing God, did not do as the king of Egypt told them; they let the boys live. (Shemot 1:15-17)*

*Shifra*

She goes about her task  
adeptly, with tender smile  
and gentle hands,  
wordlessly accomplishing  
her work.

*Puah*

Passionate whirlwind,  
ardent activist, fiery  
in her beliefs;  
her voice cries out  
invoking heaven to witness.