

An alternative or supplemental reading for “In Every Generation”
(typically found between the Passover symbols and the 2nd cup of wine)

National Council of Jewish Women

In Every Generation

בְּכָל־דּוֹר וְדוֹר חַיָּב אָדָם לִרְאוֹת אֶת־עַצְמוֹ, כְּאִלוּ הוּא יָצָא מִמִּצְרַיִם. ים:

B'chol dor vador chayav adam lirot et-atzmo, k'ilu hu yatzav mimitzrayim.

**In every generation, everyone is obligated to see themselves
as though they personally left Egypt.**

The Torah tells us, “God brought us out from there in order to lead us to and give us the land promised to our ancestors.” The seder reminds us that it was not only our ancestors whom God redeemed; God redeemed each of us. Since the time of our liberation from Egypt, we have built upon our individual and communal stories of justice, spanning continents and millennia. Just as in the Exodus, our stories define who we are as a people, and just as in the Exodus, every generation has the opportunity to be redeemed and redeem one-another.

In the 18th century, Rabbi Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev, was touring the local *matzah* factory, in order to inspect the *matzah* to ensure that it was Kosher for Passover. After looking carefully, he declared that the *matzah* inside was not Kosher. When the shocked factory owners, and community leaders asked him why not, he told them that the women in the factory were forced to labor too long and too hard, and that they were not being paid fairly for their work. He declared that the *matzah* was *traif* because it was produced through *oshek*, oppression of the workers and exploitation.

One hundred years ago last month, 146 young garment workers perished when the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory was engulfed in flames. The victims had been locked inside of the factory as they toiled in an unsafe building without appropriate breaks, wages, hours or other healthy conditions, even as they struggled to form a union that would protect them. Their death led to workplace protections and building safety codes that subsequent generations benefited from.

Today, workers continue to struggle for rights and to maintain rights hard-won. The legacy of rights that our ancestors struggled for in Egypt, our foremothers struggled for in the *matzah* factory in Berdichev and died for in the Triangle Fire, have come under attack across our nation. This year, the state of Wisconsin became the most visible example of politicians using the economic crisis as an excuse to erode protections for working people. The Jewish people, with our long collective memory, know that the modern labor movement continues the fight our ancestors took up in ancient Egypt, that Rabbi Levi Yitzhak championed, that the workers in the Triangle Factory died for. In every generation, we must seize the opportunity to stand up for humane workplace conditions for workers and justice for all.