



### From the International Labor Organization Constitution (adopted in 1919)

Whereas universal and lasting peace can be established only if it is based upon social justice;

And whereas conditions of labour exist involving such injustice, hardship and privation to large numbers of people as to produce unrest so great that the peace and harmony of the world are imperilled; and an improvement of those conditions is urgently required;

Whereas also the failure of any nation to adopt humane conditions of labour is an obstacle in the way of other nations which desire to improve the conditions in their own countries;

The High Contracting Parties, moved by sentiments of justice and humanity as well as by the desire to secure the permanent peace of the world, and with a view to attaining the objectives set forth in this Preamble, agree to the following Constitution of the International Labour Organization.



### Must all Workers Have the Same Rights?

Many products we purchase are manufactured in far away places where costs are lower. This is often due to less safe working conditions and low pay. Are countries entitled to set lower standards of workers' rights if they believe that is in their development interests? Or are all workers entitled to equivalent pay and conditions no matter where they live, such that it is wrong for a company to shift manufacturing to countries where they can pay employees less and have them work in inferior conditions?

## Workers' Rights

**The Egyptians suspected us of evil and afflicted us; they imposed hard labor upon us.**

**The Egyptians suspected us of evil**, as it is written: "Let us deal with them wisely lest they multiply, and, if we happen to be at war, they may join our enemies and fight against us and then leave the country."

**And afflicted us**, as it is written: "They set taskmasters over them in order to oppress them with their burdens; the people of Israel built Pithom and Raamses as storecities for Pharaoh."

**They imposed hard labor upon us**, as it is written: "**They imposed back-breaking labor upon the people of Israel.**"

וַיִּרְעוּ אֶת־נוּ אֱמִצְרַיִם וַיַּעֲנוּנוּ.  
וַיִּתְּנוּ עָלֵינוּ עֲבֹדָה קָשָׁה.

וַיִּרְעוּ אֶת־נוּ אֱמִצְרַיִם. כְּמָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר:  
הֲבֵה נִתְחַכְּמָה לוֹ. פֶּן־יִרְבֶּה, וְהָיָה  
כִּי־תִקְרָאנָה מִלְחָמָה, וְנוֹסֵף גַּם  
הוּא עַל־שׂוֹאֵינֵנוּ, וְנִלְחַם־בָּנוּ וְעָלָה  
מִן־הָאָרֶץ:

וַיַּעֲנוּנוּ. כְּמָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: וַיִּשְׁימוּ עָלֵינוּ  
שָׂרֵי מִסִּים, לְמַעַן עֲנֹתוּ בְּסִבְלָתָם:  
וַיִּבְּן עָרֵי מִסְכְּנוֹת לְפָרְעֹה, אֶת־פִּתּוֹם  
וְאֶת־רַעַמְסֵס:

וַיִּתְּנוּ עָלֵינוּ עֲבֹדָה קָשָׁה. כְּמָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר:  
וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ מִצְרַיִם אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּכָפָר:



### All According to Local Custom

If one hires workers and tells them to start early or stay late, in a place where it is not customary for workers to do so they cannot be compelled. In a place where the custom is to provide workers with food, employers must do so. If the custom is to also provide sweets, the employer must do so as well. All is according to local custom.

– Mishna Baba Metzia 7:1