



הסתדרות עובדי הבניין והעץ

Fresh momentum at the Builders union

After five years of dynamic, uncompromising activity, the construction industry has almost completely changed. Today, by virtue of a new, advanced collective agreement setting international-quality high standards, every construction worker in Israel starts on the job with the highest minimum wage in the land, premium social benefits, a standard, clear pay slip, vibrant social activities for the family too, and opportunities for advancement that assure good pay and job security over the long run.

The Israeli construction industry of 2014 is an example to the world in its innovation, creativity, constant improvement and in its promising future.



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Making order in the construction industry

The New Histadrut casts a spotlight on the Construction and Wood industry: A collective industry-wide agreement anchoring worker rights, continuous improvement in terms, professional training and safety. “I believe that the trend of improvement will continue under the next wage agreement too, enhancing the attraction of the industry and narrowing economic gaps,” Nissenkorn promises

What do you think would be the right policy for the Histadrut, to contend with the challenges facing the construction industry?

“The collective agreement in the construction industry provides answers to many of the unique characteristics of this industry, among them a high churn rate as workers switch between contractors. The industry has had collective agreements since 1968. One of the central features in the collective agreement signed in 2010 is that it makes order, supplanting a range of ‘patchwork’ agreements and boosting the ability of the workers to understand and be aware of their rights.

This agreement significantly improved employment terms, which could help attract Israeli workers to the industry while preserving equal and fair treatment of all construction workers – Israeli, Palestinian and foreign. Among the new terms: an industry-wide minimum wage of ILS 5,000, a 6% raise spread over three years, a pension plan from day one, an advanced-training fund (for lower-ranking workers too, after three years of work), industry-wide application of seniority accrual, better terms of vacation days and convalescence, clear rules for promotion, employer participation in extension training, holiday gifts, and more.

I believe the trend of improvement will continue under the next wage agreement, making the industry more attractive and helping to narrow gaps in the economy.”

In recent years, professional training in Israel has been deteriorating. What should be done to revitalize this crucial resource?

“Professional training is an important pillar of the economy and of the social security system too. A person who can’t find work needs to receive tools to change profession, giving him a future and economic independence. It’s also the best solution for employers, who get workers with better skills, and for the government, which will spend less on welfare.

However, professional training in Israel has been eroding. Fixing this will require collaboration between the government, the Histadrut and employers. It will require government financing and involvement in order to achieve progress in this resource-heavy field. It is also important for employers to encourage workers to seek professional training, for the sake of their development and advancement.

I believe that joint action can revitalize and broaden professional training, with a special focus on the construction, hotel and tourism industries. Recently an agreement was signed between the Histadrut, the government and the Association of Contractors and Builders in Israel for the allocation of ILS 90 million to train Israelis in construction. I hope this agreement is the beginning of a change in trend.

In this context, we should applaud the activity of the Magalim Foundation, which enables workers in physically eroding professions such as construction to change profession and retrain in order to reduce their erosion.”

The most work accidents are in the construction industry. What needs to happen to reduce the incidence? What is the Histadrut doing about it and what are its plans for the future?

“There is no doubt that confronting the problem of accidents in the workplace is of a mission of national priority. What’s needed is strong enforcement of safety rules on construction sites, having employers provide protective gear and in general, raising awareness among workers. External enforcement by the state can’t replace internal awareness and enforcement. Here, what’s important is extra training, campaigns and orderly instruction at workplaces.

The activity of the Construction and Wood Workers Union should be praised for its safety training at various construction sites and for its many seminars, in which more than 1,500 workers participate each year.



This critical issue needs more work, and it is important to make a consistent and resolute demand for action on the part of the government too.”

One final question. What are your main goals as chairman of the Histadrut?

“Aside from continuing to strengthen the Histadrut’s status among trade unions, I intend to broaden and strengthen its activity as a significant social movement to reduce poverty, narrow social gaps and inequality in the economy, which are critical issues for the future of Israeli society. The ideological social activity is designed to complement the Histadrut’s praiseworthy activity in trade unionization – activity which, I have no doubt, is changing the face of Israeli society including through the growing trend of organization, and through collective agreements and expansion orders. The Histadrut will continue to be active in these areas, including through unionizing industries not accustomed to organized labor.”

The Construction and Wood Workers Union deserves kudos for its safety training at construction sites and for its many seminars, in which more than 1,500 workers participate each year. This critical issue needs more work: it is crucial to consistently and resolutely demand action on the part of the government too.



Advancing, building and improving

“We made history. We achieved breakthrough reforms in Israeli construction and can show the world an innovative, advanced industry that’s good for its workers. This is a marathon and we’re still running. A lot more goals and important challenges still lie ahead,” says Yitzchak Moyal, Chairman of the Construction and Wood Workers Union, summing up the last five years and looking ahead to the future. Among the plans on the agenda: continuing to improve pay for workers in all sectors, to create an academic track for project managers, intensify safety-related activities and establish regional parity committees to provide legal counsel to workers.

“I am determined to stop the revolving door of temporary workers in construction. I see an organized, fair and valuable track that gives workers a wide professional horizon and respectable job security”

There’s no question about it: looking at the construction industry today and the status its workers have achieved, revolution has come to Israel, that is influencing the wider world as well.

- **The collective industry-wide agreement assures workers of the highest minimum wage in Israel, and premium social benefits such as pension provisions and training fund provisions from the first day of work, applicable equally to all construction workers – Israeli, Palestinian and foreign.**
- **Nearly 16,000 Israeli workers have joined the construction industry over the last five years, according to official figures of the Housing Ministry.**
- **A government allocation of ILS 90 million for the “Israeli Builders” assimilation venture, to increase Israeli manpower in the industry and encourage Hebrew labor through better conditions and in a vital work environment, based on job security and opportunities for advancement.**
- **A great array of social welfare activities including, for the first time in the construction industry, deluxe outings, team-building activities and the best in professional training programs, combining leisure and essential knowledge.**
- **Expanding work safety-related activity through lessons, extension studies, exercises and lectures. We also published a general safety addendum and distributed it to workers, providing all the information they need to stay safe when working in construction, and bolstering their personal responsibility for safety.**

You faced quite a few challenges when you began your term five years ago. Of which achievement are you proudest?

“There is no one single achievement, because all the achievements are interconnected. First of all, we wanted to organize the industry,



to create a collective agreement suited to the contemporary economic reality, in which workers are respected. We also began a structured training program, took in more Israeli workers and widened social welfare activities. Our efforts are all designed to change the image of the construction industry, which today symbolizes not only technological innovation and progress but also job security.” **While discussing achievements, we have to mention the main achievement in recent months – in parallel with the government’s permission to increase the number of foreign construction workers to 15,000**

by July 2019, you successfully negotiated ILS 90 million in funding to continue implementing the Israeli Builders venture.

“That’s right. That is definitely one of our most significant achievements. After a year and a half of struggle, we reached understandings with the Finance and Economy ministries for about ILS 90 million in funding, to help the construction industry hire 2,000 new Israeli workers. This is how we will achieve our main goal: to integrate more and more Israelis into the construction industry, which will stimulate employment in the economy in general and the pace of construction in the industry in



particular. This agreement proves the high esteem for the "Israeli Builders" pilot we led.

What will the workers hired under this program receive?

"They will receive professional training, a structured advancement track, and mainly, the right to earn a living with dignity from the very first day. They will begin with the highest minimum wage in the economy, ILS 5,000 a month, and have opportunity to earn more within the first half year. From the sixth month of employment, they will earn at least ILS 9,000 a month. Also, they will receive social benefits from the very first day of work such as pension and convalescence rights, and provisions into an advanced-training fund. This is huge news for the construction industry and for the Israeli economy. For people seeking work in construction, this agreement gives good terms, fitting wages and a real horizon for advancement. The employment terms in the construction industry are unmatched in any other industry. The structure of the course will be adapted to the contemporary reality in the industry, so all its graduates can find jobs immediately in relevant workplaces."

The benefits you mention are just some of the benefits in the breakthrough collective agreement, which was expanded in 2010. Can this significant advance really present the construction industry as a real alternative to the high-tech industry for young Israelis?

"This agreement, which is an even-handed one encompassing foreign and Palestinian workers as well, was born of the goal to organize the building industry and assure workers and employers of constancy over time. Over the years the industry became known for instability; Israeli workers would quit after some time, because they were working very hard without adequate wage terms. We wanted to change the reality, to give workers good reasons to stay in the industry and develop in it. Therefore, we offer a high minimum wage, social benefits under preferred terms, an advancement track, professional training and broad social welfare activities.

Bear in mind that the construction industry has changed. Technological progress has reached Israel too and is starving for skilled people to control the advanced machines. We convinced the employers' organization and the government to support better terms because the entire economy will benefit from wider recruitment of skilled, quality Israeli workers to the industry."

Yet much work still lies ahead. What plans has the Construction and Wood Workers Union set itself for the years to come?

"There's still much to be done regarding **improvement of wage terms and advancement possibilities at workplaces**, including improving the employment conditions of foreign and Palestinian workers. The status of foreign workers in Israel is much better than in other countries. We mean to continue acting on their behalf, to serve as an address for them insofar as is possible in finding work and protecting their rights. The



equitable agreement we signed is an example to the world, and through it we will **intensify our ties with labor organizations around the world**. These ties have been developing in recent years and the mutual inspiration they enable leads to deeper understanding, insights and new goals for the local industry. We also want to develop academic study tracks for project managers, project managers and industry people in key positions, and to set up a club with special benefits for project managers.

Reaching all the industry's members working at thousands of sites is no minor challenge, but we are certainly investing and will continue to invest effort in **developing direct contacts with thousands of workers**. For this aim, we will utilize the media and will take every opportunity to present the innovations in the industry, so all workers know their rights and know how to demand what they deserve. If a worker suspects his rights are being infringed, we're the address. In the years to come **we will act to expand legal counseling and to reduce claims against employers** by setting up regional parity committees that can handle more claims well, in less time. This legal counseling, which will be accessible to all workers – Israeli, foreign

and Palestinian – could resolve disputes and prevent claims from reaching the courts.

We also intend to create an **orderly program to encourage workers to join the Histadrut** and to widely implement the agreement.

We will be compiling **personal information folios** for each worker, based on his status, so he knows all his rights and obligations. We will also continue to **fight the manpower companies**, whose workers are deprived of social benefits and rights.

Regarding **safety** – the stress on the subject will be broadened and strengthened by adopting new solutions to prevent accidents in the workplace, and applying pressure to government to support and help in promoting the importance of safety in the workplace. Apropos working with government, we mean to **continue cultivating our collaboration with the Economy Ministry regarding training, extension studies and safety-related activities, and with the Population Registrar regarding handling foreign workers and Palestinians, and also with the Finance Ministry, in respect to budgets and promoting the construction industry as a career choice for young people**. The industry's image has already begun to change and I aspire for it to improve a lot more, in the

view of the public and of the government too. Regarding **social welfare**, we have made substantial changes, but there remain a lot of ideas to implement for the workers and their families. Social welfare activities bolster the attraction of the industry and motivation among the workers. Continuing intensive activity will require very large budgets and fruitful collaboration with the Association of Contractors and Builders in Israel.

Forging closer ties with the employers' organization is a perpetual goal for us. We have a shared interest and will continue to cultivate that relationship.

Regarding **relations with pensioners**, we will act to broaden direct contact with the industry among pensioners, the dear, dedicated people who built this country. We will continue to include them and hold activities celebrating them."

The changes made, and to be made, are an inseparable part of the profound change that the New Histadrut has undergone.

How has this change affected Israeli society?

"During Ofer Eini's term as chairman of the Histadrut, a system calling for the establishment of working relations and mutuality was instituted, which changed the entire way that organized labor was treated in Israel. The activities he led proved that a worker working in dignity can make a living in dignity and plan a proper future for himself and his family. The economic reforms making pension provisioning compulsory, the various collective agreements and the way specific industries were handled created new understanding among the Israeli public: to ensure that one's rights in the labor market are secure, one has to join the Histadrut. In parallel, the situation of the public changed: the influence of capitalism and the global village created unacceptable social gaps, which led to the social-justice protests of 2011. Housing prices kept going up but wages didn't, and thousands of workers were exploited through employment under substandard conditions, barely making the minimum wage. Poverty widened, reaching throughout all levels of society. We reached the situation in which a household with two breadwinners lived in overdraft. Over these years, significant achievements were made in the public sector. Over 400,000 workers joined the Histadrut and lately we see these successes filtering through to the private sector, with workers from new industries organizing, such as in insurance, telecommunications, sports, high-tech, aviation, shipping, and multinational companies."

Based on the plans of the Construction and Wood Workers Union, where do you see the construction industry in five years?

"The construction industry will continue to be the driver leading the economy and contributing to its growth. Increasing numbers of projects under government programs will accelerate developments in the industry regarding technological machinery, foreign investment, and the creation of jobs, which



will spur more hiring and training in using the technology. Among the main national projects slated for the near future are building a rail line to Eilat, developing the infrastructure on Route 6, building the new military facilities in the south, and widening Route 531. Also, the pace of building for young couples will be stepped up in order to reduce the shortage in housing. I have no doubt that the construction

industry will remain at the center of the social and media agenda."

How does the working plan encompass other industries under your wing – the wood industry, quarries, and stone?

"In recent years, together with our success in putting the construction industry on the right path of development, innovation and substantial change in image, we studied



these areas as well. The intense competition characterizing the wood industry alongside parallel imports and the tremendous shortage in young, skilled manpower weigh heavily on the prosperity of local woodworking shops and constrain their possibilities of income. Under these circumstances, it is not easy at all to generate industry-wide change: it's certainly a challenge. I believe that before we start to

organize these industries, they will require thorough study, about their characteristics, existing policy and agreements, forecasts for the market's future, and so on.

Over the next five years, I aspire to elevate the wood industry to the status it deserves, exactly as is happening in the construction industry, and together with the ACI, intend to sign an industry-wide agreement that

upgrades the workers' terms of employment, rights and wages and also, to set up a prosperous social welfare fund that grants benefits and rewards. We shall act to achieve company-wide collective agreements in the big wood industries, which employ more than 50,000 workers, in order to regulate working and wage conditions, exactly as exists at Regba, the stone industry and the quarries – we shall act to institute new agreements as in stone and plaster.

In order to examine these industries properly and design the most efficient solutions for them, I appointed Ofra Zion as secretary of the national division of the wood industry. She brings broad professional experience to the job, as secretary of the national division of the Transport Workers Union. Among other things, she handled a large number of collective agreements at the aviation companies."

In your opinion, after this profound work, will the wood industry reach achievements as happened in the construction industry?

"We have a lot of hard work before us.

These are satellite, secondary industries in the economy. It was easier to persuade the decision-makers regarding the construction industry, because after all it is an economic driver that effects the economy's development. But I'm optimistic. Some said that it would be hard to change the construction industry too, but we did it.

Over the next five years we will spotlight this issue and I will help the national division secretary of the wood industry in every way to succeed, so the wood industry, the quarries and stone industry get on the right track to success and prosperity."

The Trade Union Division:

The achievements that revolutionized the construction industry

In the year 2010, signature on an industry-wide collective agreement brought momentous, sweeping change to the employment terms of workers. This change was just the harbinger of new reforms that reward, organize and improve the working conditions and professional training for the industry's workers and managers. Moreover, the changes instituted by the Trade Union Division in recent years herald a new, modern and contemporary image of the construction industry, attracting young Israelis to see it as their economic future

Together with the changes that technological progress has made in the nature of construction work, Yitzchak Moyal, chairman of the Construction and Wood Workers Union, understood that employment terms also needed to substantially change, and that if Israeli employers want Israeli workers, they had to take groundbreaking steps.

"Today the construction industry is based in part on high-tech methods," says Moyal. "The advanced machinery, the construction methods and the quality of finishing are much more professional and accurate than in the past, and jobs take less time to finish. However, the work is still very hard and the conditions are not easy, which over years prevented workers from viewing their job as a permanent place to persevere and develop.

We reached the conclusion that is exactly where the revolution has to happen for things to change. Therefore, the collective agreement, expanded in 2010, that applies to all workers in the construction industry – contractors, construction companies, infrastructure contractors and heavy mechanical equipment, and renovation workers as well – regulated equitable wage terms for Israeli, Palestinian and foreign workers, raises the minimum wage above the general minimum wage in the economy, enables every worker to get premium social benefits from the first day – a comprehensive pension plan, a training fund, provident funds, convalescence – and also offers an advancement track through administrative management."

The agreement also provides, in contrast with the past, that seniority will adhere to industry-wide norms, meaning a worker's rank will depend on his number of his years in the industry, not the number of hours worked with a specific contractor. Also, the agreement regulates calculation of vacation days and compensation, and defines the working week in hours.

In practice, the new agreement changed the composition of pay, following which the structure of pay-slips also needs to change, giving both worker and employer a better understanding of their rights and obligations. Moyal: "The previous industry-wide agreements were patchworks, difficult to implement, and



Signing a collective agreement at Ackerstein



Signing a collective agreement at Even V'Sid



Signing the collective agreement for the construction industry

created misunderstandings. Our goal was to build a standardized pay-slip, correct, accurate and proper so that everybody – workers and employers – could know and understand the meaning of each and every item.”

Investing in advertising and media exposure

Alongside the main points of the industry-wide agreement, the Trade Union Division focuses on improving and updating existing collective agreements at the various companies, in order to regulate and improve labor relations, and their workers' wage and pension terms. Also, as additional construction companies joined the Trade Union Division, the Construction and Wood Workers Union is working on reaching new agreements with them too.

“Today, on the one hand, more construction companies are organizing under the Histadrut and on the other hand, more young people are exposed to construction work and understand that the image it used to have isn't relevant to the times,” says Moyal. “It is important for us to reach as young an audience as possible, such as discharged soldiers, and show them the changes in the industry, in technology and in working methods and in worker status, terms of employment, advancement, pay, and welfare.” The Trade Union Division is working towards this goal through intensive activity in the media, public relations, direct mail, and conventions. These steps raise public awareness of innovations in construction, of the abilities and economic possibilities there. Many young



people understand that the image has changed and that this industry can be seen as steady workplace that presents opportunities for future development.

The construction industry offers 42 professions. But training is required for employers to receive professional, quality manpower. The industry-wide collective agreement helped the Construction and Wood Workers Union petition the Economy Ministry to open academic institutions – colleges to provide three-month academic and practical courses, then a three-month internship at a construction company.

“The construction industry is working to improve improving the terms and welfare of existing workers, and to bring in more and more workers,” says Moyal. “The decision-makers in government understand that. They see the labor agreements through which we improve the employment terms of workers, and understand that the construction industry is the biggest growth driver in the economy. That's why they cooperate with us and we have a say in the corridors of Knesset, and receive assistance in training, in order to provide employers with more skilled Israeli hands.”

Working ceaselessly for safety

The incidence of accidents on the job in the construction industry has been climbing for years. A two-year plan by the Construction and Wood Workers Union ranks safety as a primary goal among its activities, with the aim of reaching zero casualties.

Soon a safety instruction booklet will be disseminated among all workers, and will be appended to the collective agreement as well. Its purpose is to raise awareness of safety on construction sites among employers and workers alike

The number of people killed during the first half of 2013 in the construction and engineering building industry was 44.5% higher than in the same period of the year before. Among the causes were falls from heights (the leading cause), blows from moving objects, becoming trapped, electrocution, and more.

The construction industry is considered risky everywhere in the world. Construction sites feature heavy lifting machinery, cranes and other huge machines that are enormously heavy and can pose mortal danger. The work environment changes; some trades do not involve working on-site all the time, and workers may not know the unique hazards of a given site. Also, failure to maintain equipment or to wear protective gear can lead to accidents and casualties.

To drive home the issue among supervisors and workers on construction sites, through the year the Construction and Wood Workers Union, in collaboration with the Institute for Occupational Safety and Hygiene, carries out safety training, in the framework of extension training for construction workers.

In this framework, the trainees undergo safety training through mobile training vehicles and drills that feature multimedia workstations with touch screens in various languages: Hebrew, Arabic, Chinese, Russian, Bulgarian and more.

The workers also attend lectures and instruction by representatives of the Institute for Occupational Safety and Hygiene. "From our perspective, keeping safe at work is to preserve human life and to care for the family. Harm to a worker means ruination of a home, and we will do everything it takes to prevent that," stresses Yitzchak Moyal, chairman of the Construction and Wood Workers Union.

Safety as the uppermost goal, for workers and employers

To maintain safety on a routine basis at sites, the Institute for Occupational Safety and Hygiene hands out notebooks for the site project managers to register safety-related activities while assuring that the machinery is properly used and maintained.

Beyond the instruction it provides, the Construction and Wood Workers Union believes that safety should be paramount in the minds of workers and managers



Signing a collective agreement on safety with Solel Boneh. Left: Solel Boneh CEO Yaron Karisi

on construction sites. Signs are hung at sites warning of the hazards in the work environment, and in 2012, "Safety Year," thousands of shirts bearing the motto "No more work accidents" were handed out to workers on construction sites and wood workshops.

As said, these days the stress on safety at work has been raised a notch with the publication of a national safety addendum for all construction workers – Israeli, foreign and Palestinian. The purpose of this addendum is to bolster the personal responsibility of each worker to check and ensure that the issue of safety is clear to him and understood, that he knows what direction he needs to receive, what explanations, equipment and so on. With all the resources and vast effort the Trade Union Division devotes to preventing accidents at construction sites, the Construction and Wood Workers Union understands that for safe, careful working practices to be integrated properly, employers have to be harnessed to the commitment too, and to routine activity on safety.

An outstanding example of this is signature on special safety agreements. In 2012, for the first time in the industry, an agreement of the type was signed with Solel Boneh, a member of the Shikun & Binui group.

The agreement in question was a collective one, designed to improve the prevention of work accidents and to instill a culture of safety on the job.

"The issue of safety is an integral part of our working plan and the collective agreement," says Moyal. "We took a decision to broaden and intensify activity to raise awareness of safety and the prevention of work accidents. Among our activities: training thousands of workers in working at heights according to the March 2009 safety standard for such work. We bring a mobile safety vehicle to every extension training program, to drill the workers; we hold special workshops and merge the issue into conventions on other areas as well. Even though it is the employer's responsibility to direct and train his workers, we hold the worker personally responsible for knowing what to ask, to warn and caution. Therefore, we put together a national safety addendum listing instructions, equipment, hazards and the way to prevent them. Every worker and employer receives a personal notebook that they take to the job every day. We do not cavil at any means to raise awareness, and hold it important to disseminate the information among all workers in the field – Israeli, foreign and Palestinian. Safety is the cornerstone of all our activities."

מעגלים - הקרן למען בעלי מקצועות שוחקים

כשהעובדים שלך מקבלים שדרוג מקצועי במימון המדינה, והארגון שלך צומח בזכות עובדים מרוצים, טובים ויעילים יותר, זו כלכלה חברתית!

מהו מקצוע שוחק?

מקצוע ייחשב כמקצוע שוחק אם מתקיימים לגביו לפחות שניים מהמאפיינים הבאים:

- עבודה הכרוכה בסחיבת משאות כבדים באופן ממושך
- עבודה הדורשת עמידה ממושכת
- עבודה פיזית בתנאי אקלים קשים
- עבודה בסביבת רעש ושחיקה הגורמת לירידה בשמיעה
- עבודה בתנאי חום ורטיבות, ללא קשר למזג האוויר
- עבודה בתנאי קור, ללא קשר למזג האוויר
- עבודה בסביבת חומרים מסוכנים
- עבודה בסביבת ריחות קשים
- נהגים ומפעילי צמ"ה הנדרשים לנסיעות ממושכות
- עבודה בסיכון בטיחותי גבוה
- עבודה במשמרות קבועות לאורך זמן, ולפחות 4 משמרות ערב/לילה בחודש
- עובד עם שחיקה על בסיס קביעה רפואית של ועדה של המוסד לביטוח לאומי

בדוק עכשיו אם עובדיך זכאים להטבות המיוחדות שאנו מציעים וכך תספיק ליהנות מתקציב הקרן עוד השנה

מי אנחנו

"מעגלים" הינה קרן במימון המדינה שהוקמה לטובת עובדים בני 50+ שעוסקים במקצועות שוחקים מעל 7 שנים במצטבר, או 20 שנות ותק ללא הגבלת גיל. עובדים אשר חלקם ודאי חשים שחיקה, יכולים לעבור מסלול הכשרה, שדרוג, או הסבה במימון מלא של הקרן. המעסיק יהנה מעובד מרוצה יותר, מקצועי יותר ועם תפוקה גבוהה יותר.

מסלולים

קרן "מעגלים" מציעה 2 מסלולים מרכזיים, הפועלים בתיאום מלא עם המעסיק, על מנת להבטיח שיתוף פעולה פורה בין ההנהלה לעובדים לטובת צמיחתו של הארגון.

מסלול קידום ושדרוג עובדים

במסלול זה הקרן תממן באופן מלא מסלול הכשרה, שדרוג או הסבה מקצועית לעובדים. בנוסף, עובדים העונים על הקריטריונים של הקרן יוכלו לקבל דמי קיום במהלך תקופת הלימודים.

מסלול פרישה מוקדמת

במסלול זה הקרן מעניקה לעובדים עד שנתיים לפני גיל הפנסיה, דמי קיום, המאפשרים להם פרישה מוקדמת מהקבוע בחוק. מסלול זה מיועד לתת מענה במקרים בהם עובד נמנע מלצאת לפנסיה מוקדמת בשל שיקולים כלכליים, וכתוצאה מכך עלולות להיפגע בריאותו ותפוקתו.

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Reviving Hebrew labor in the construction industry

Since the “Israeli Builders” venture began in March 2009, more than 60% of its course graduates have been hired by construction companies, and continue to advance in the industry. Recently, after a protracted struggle by the Construction and Wood Workers Union, the Finance Ministry agreed to finance ILS 90 million in order for the venture to continue. All other ventures tried in previous years to attract Israelis to construction and get them to stay, failed, but today, thanks to changes the industry is undergoing in image and in wage terms, and advancement opportunities, more and more young people on the one hand and construction companies on the other are showing an interest and taking courses

Recently, the number of Israelis employed in construction has been increasing, thanks to the terrific efforts invested by the Construction and Wood Workers Union, the Israeli Builders Association, and the Foundation for Support and Development of the Construction Field in Israel to Encourage Hebrew Labor. The “Israeli Builders” venture was created precisely for this goal, which has a Zionist aspect as well as a practical one – to ensure that the market isn’t dependent solely on approval of quotas for foreign workers and the volatile security situation, which affects the presence or absence of foreign and Palestinian workers. Today, after 17 courses for scaffolders and two courses for project managers, it is clear that the venture’s pilot was a success.

This success has gained added meaning in recent months with the approval of an ILS 90 million budget by the ministries of Finance and Economy, to hire about 2,000 new Israeli workers for the construction industry. Under this program, workers hired through “Israeli Builders” will receive professional training, a structured advancement track, and mainly, improved pay terms and social benefits. The starting pay will be the highest minimum wage in the economy, at ILS 5,000 a month, but starting from the sixth month of employment, pay can rise to at least ILS 9,000.

The “Israeli Builders” venture is the fruit of collaboration between the Foundation for the Encouragement and Development of the Construction Field in Israel, the Construction and Wood Workers Union, the Israel Builders Association - Boney Ha’aretz, the Economy Ministry, the Finance Ministry and also, the Defense Ministry, which grants benefits to discharged soldiers and jobseekers who want to join the venture.

The venture is promoted through advertising in the newspapers, at Employment Service offices and at the Discharged Soldiers Department career consultancy. Candidates are chosen in a multi-stage process, starting with a phone interview, a personal interview face to face, analysis and an interview by a college search committee. Before each course, the Construction and Wood Workers Union, together with the Foundation for Support and Development of the Construction Field in





Signing the last agreement to train Israeli workers. From right: Yitzchak Moyal, Chairman of the Construction and Wood Workers Union; Naftali Bennett, Economy Minister; and Nissim Bublil, President of Boney Haaretz.

Israel, hold conventions at the colleges, which are attended by all the relevant parties. The advertising and campaigning drive even reaches army bases, where lectures are held for soldiers ahead of discharge, brochures are handed out and all the advantages of working in the industry are reviewed. Over time, it turned out that not only discharged male soldiers were interested, but surprisingly, female ones were too.

Getting on track and persistently advancing...

Courses for scaffolders are available at Economy Ministry colleges – in Jerusalem, Holon and Be'er Sheva. They consist of a theoretical part lasting three months, and a

practical part (interning on construction sites), lasting three more months. The courses are taught by the best teachers in each area of construction, and place a strong emphasis on safety. At the end, graduates take two tests, theoretical and practical.

More than 20 construction companies work with the venture and in recent years, workers from a wide range of companies have taken the courses, of whom 24 went on to the venture's advanced courses for candidate project managers.

"The courses are structured very professionally in order to provide the construction companies with skilled, trained manpower, carefully located, with high motivation and the ability to

provide maximum productivity," says Yitzchak Moyal, chairman of the Construction and Wood Workers Union. "This venture was an unquestionable success, proving that Israelis are willing to work, but have to be given an orderly, organized study track that gives them experience and advancement opportunity." The track Moyal refers to is actually the big advantage conferred by the "Israeli Builders" venture for young people who want to grow in the industry. Beyond being assured of jobs at construction companies near their homes, graduates hired through the venture can advance to project management within three and a half years, while workers not hailing from the venture wait five years for advancement. Advancement is a three-stage process. After one year of work with building contractors, candidates for promotion take another test, and advance from Practical Level 2 to Practical Level 3. After another year, another test is given. Any worker passing it may advance after another year and a half to training in project management. Also, high grants are conferred for consistency, and the Construction and Wood Workers Union and the Foundation for Support and Development of the Construction Field in Israel help resolve problems with pay, if the employer doesn't provide a proper solution. Moyal: "The extra budget we fought for a year and a half to get enables us to recruit motivated young people, who see themselves belonging to the biggest growth driver in the economy, earning decent pay and receiving respectable, appropriate terms of employment. Beyond that, we can expand the range of professional courses to tiling, plastering, cranes, plumbing and more. A track that enables study, experience, placement with appropriate construction companies and an organized advancement track assure that more and more Israelis will join the construction industry and build their economic and family's future here."

Professional training programs for construction and wood workers

Over the last five years, more than 1,500 construction and wood workers belonging to the Construction and Wood Workers Union have embarked each year on professional training programs – spending the weekend at hotels combining leisure in luxury with study. The programs are organized by the Construction and Wood Workers Union together with the Foundation for Support and Development of the Construction Field in Israel, which subsidize most of the weekend's cost for workers and their partners. Each year 22 programs are held at the best hotels in Eilat, the Dead Sea, Tiberias and Tel Aviv.

The Construction and Wood Workers Union makes its best effort to enable every worker to participate in a training program once every two years: to study, to gain important tools and mainly, to have a good time. "Every year we invest a lot of resources in holding high-quality, enjoyable training programs, which enrich the workers' knowledge but mainly give them a special opportunity to relax, take time off their hard work and have fun with family and friends," says Shaul Kateb, acting chairman of the Construction and Wood Workers Union and manager of its training programs.

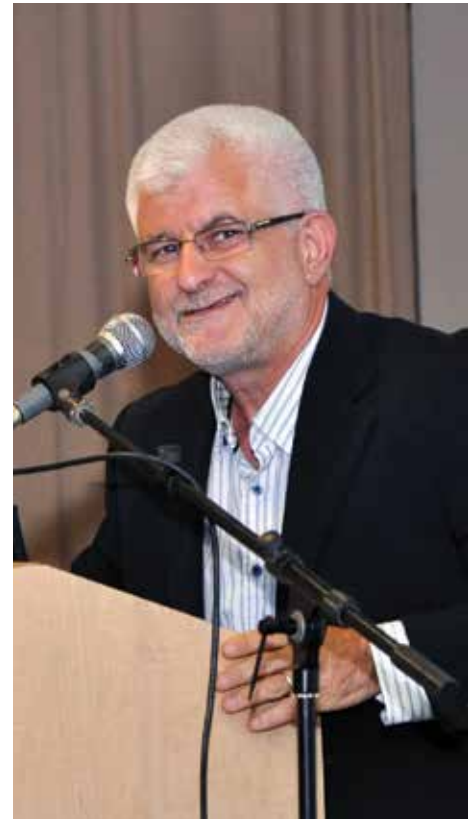
Each training program lasts over a long weekend, starting Thursday and ending Saturday night. It includes frontal lectures on safety, labor law, pension insurance and workers' rights, an explanation about the structure of their pay-slip, and guest lectures on a host of subjects relevant to the participants.

"Together with pleasure, camaraderie, socializing with workers from all sorts of workplaces, and fun for body and soul, it is important to us that the workers thoroughly know their rights," says Yitzchak Moyal, Chairman of the Construction and Wood Workers Union. "They need to know how to read and check their pay-slip, understand their pension provisioning report and understand what social benefits they deserve, which questions to ask and from whom. The construction workers are employed at sites all around Israel: these training programs are an opportunity to meet with colleagues, hear from them about their working conditions and rights, and get a picture of what's happening in the industry regarding safety and labor relations."

Beyond broadening knowledge and professionalism, live entertainment is provided on one of the evenings, and a special lecture is booked for the workers' wives and daughters.

These training programs are available to all workers belonging to the Histadrut, who under the rules may attend every two years. The Construction and Wood Workers Union places an emphasis on uncompromising controls, making absolutely sure that only eligible





Daniel Hadad, director-general of the Israel Institute for Occupational Safety and Hygiene



workers enjoy these activities. Special training programs are also held for workers from the Arab sector, Palestinian workers and foreign workers, with the help of a translator into Chinese.

5-star luxury weekend

"From year to year we improve and upgrade the conditions," says Kateb. "The budget grows and enables us to offer prestigious hotels, to field more buses and to include the best expert lecturers in each area. Beyond that, we invest a lot in the subject of safety, which is the central topic of the program. The workers

not only learn in class but practice using the mobile safety vehicle, and watch films that warn about hazards and call for heightened caution.

Beyond the enrichment of the theoretical content and use of the hotel facilities, the workers are pampered with the utmost in perks brought to them by the Construction and Wood Workers Union and Foundation for Support and Development of the Construction Field in Israel. They get the Friday weekend edition of the newspaper to the room, a modest gift at the end of the training program

and a certificate (confirming participation in six study hours), signed by Yitzchak Moyal, Chairman of the Construction and Wood Workers Union, and Nissim Bublil, president of Israel Builders Association - Boney Ha'aretz. Since the training programs are for the workers, their training and their welfare – at the end of each one, the Construction and Wood Workers Union asks for feedback from the workers, in order to streamline, improve and refresh future events. Indeed, the standards of the programs rise from year to year, and the workers get the best in vacation conditions."

Investment in worker welfare - Vibrant social activity in the construction industry

Over the last five years, the social welfare budget has grown by as much as millions of shekels a year, driving one of the most outstanding changes in the construction industry. As part of the drive to improve the image of the construction industry, it was decided to focus on showing appreciation and rewarding workers for their hard work, and accordingly, social activity was stepped up. More benefits are offered to the workers and from year to year, not inconsiderable thought and creativity are invested in creating ever more extraordinary, impressive and fun events

On June 10, 2011, the Construction and Wood Workers Union embarked on a new tradition in the construction industry, subsidized by the Foundation for Support and Development of the Construction Field in Israel: outings for workers and their families. What might have been a no-brainer at large enterprises elsewhere in the economy didn't exist in the construction branch, whose workers invest their best efforts in hard work every day.

Since then, each summer begins with an event and more than 24,000 workers have had the privilege of spending quality time with their families at the water park in central Tel Aviv, and to watch shows and concerts by leading performers.

Many workers have expressed satisfaction with the excellent organization and were thrilled to come with their families. They had a terrific time and said that compared with previous years, they feel that now there's a body that represents them with dignity, that cares, and invests a great deal in their enjoyment.

The summer festivity provides a great deal of treats and surprises, based on the view that the construction industry has indeed undergone a process of industrialization in recent years, but the workers remain the key resource in construction, and they should be appreciated and nurtured.

If in the past, the main function of the Trade Union Division was to protect worker rights, today it has another prominent role: to care for their welfare, enjoyment, and the quality of their leisure – exactly as other industries do. The annual outing is just one of the main welfare activities that the Construction and Wood Workers Union has initiated in recent years for its workers, in collaboration with the Israel Builders Association - Boney Ha'aretz, and Foundation for Support and Development of the Construction Field in Israel.

Among the activities and benefits offered are free jelly donuts (sufganiyot) at Hanukkah and hamentaschen cookies (oznei Haman) at Purim, a special Hanukkah show for the workers' children, and Passover charity activities; scholarships for advanced study

for workers, half a million shekels a year for scholarships for workers' children to study at institutions of higher education; and special events as well, such as for International Women's Day, Outstanding Worker ceremonies, and field (sports) days. The Construction and Wood Workers Union also invites children from Akim Israel (the National Association for the Habilitation of Children and Adults with Intellectual Disabilities) to many of the social welfare events, providing them with a warm embrace and support, and pleasure.

Yitzchak Moyal, Chairman of the Construction and Wood Workers Union: "If a worker does not receive a package of services, why would he stay in the industry over time? He needs more than work and a monthly paycheck. The worker is entitled to an advancement track, welfare and attractive terms, just as workers in other industries receive. Both motivation and productivity improve. We receive not a few letters of

thanks for the services we provide to the industry workers."

Cultivating the status of women and that sportive spirit

The first Sports Day in the construction industry was held in 2009. Since then, each year it gets bigger, smoother and a lot more sporty, with a wide range of innovations and interesting activities.

From the perspective of the organizers, Sports Day is a prime example of the spirit in which an athletic competition should be held – with dignity, fairness, and mutual respect. The day not only bonds, and forges a spirit of unity among the workers representing the companies: it also positions sports as an important value in a healthy lifestyle, whether at work, relaxing or at home with the family. One of the refreshing new features in recent Sports Days has been the establishment of women's volleyball teams. Women have been a minority, but a growing one, at these events, but receive a special focus on the





Yitzchak Moyal and Adv. Eyal Shalev, director-general of the Foundation for Support and Development of the Construction Field in Israel, at an awards ceremony for outstanding workers.



the Construction and Wood Workers Union, the president of Israel Builders Association - Boney Ha'aretz, and the director of the Foundation for Support and Development of the Construction Field in Israel. Outstanding workers are awarded a certificate and bonus. Moyal: "We invest a great deal of thought and significant resources in the process of choosing the outstanding workers and in producing the ceremony itself. We keenly feel it important that the ceremony be distinguished, and reflect our appreciation of their hard work. In contrast with the past, to be a construction worker in Israel isn't a thing to be taken for granted: Israelis have great difficulty surviving in the industry over time. The criterion of seniority therefore also plays an important part in choosing the outstanding workers.

Working in construction is physically hard and unglamorous, to put it mildly. We are at the height of a process of changing the image of the construction worker from a man who doesn't know his rights and doesn't get social benefits, to a worker who is familiar with the collective agreement in the construction industry, aspires to acquire professional knowledge, and can enjoy social activities during his little free time. It is important to note that alongside the Israeli workers, we award excellence bonuses to Palestinian and foreign workers as well, because of international treaties and because in recent years, foreign and Palestinian workers have become a highly significant workforce in construction. Most of the foundation work in construction is handled by them."

Social welfare is unquestionably one of the important topics promoted by the Construction and Wood Workers Union, in collaboration with Israel Builders Association - Boney Ha'aretz and the Foundation for Support and Development of the Construction Field in Israel.

A new section for social welfare and consumerism is being constructed in the Fund's website, to offer construction workers attractive deals on culture events and leisure, telecommunications, health-care, cars, food and also, a wide range of other consumer-related areas to improve their and their family's quality of life.

Social welfare is an integral part of the annual work program, and from year to year, workers are offered more opportunities and a wider selection of events.



Field Day for the Construction and Wood industry workers

International Women's Day events. The construction industry is perceived as a place for men. Two years ago the union decided to start a new tradition, once a year training the spotlight on the women working in administration, who make a great contribution to the industry's prosperity and success. This event also reflects the high esteem for the many roles women take on as workers, mothers and managers of home and family. The first event, which was an impressive one, was held in 2012, at a highly-invested gala event – an outing for women with a lot of laughter, good food, music and special shows. Its success was clear and in the last two

years, more than 1,000 women have taken part.

Celebrating excellence in the industry

Another celebration courtesy of the Construction and Wood Workers Union is definitely the day bonuses for excellence are awarded to construction and wood workers, a tradition begun in 2009. A great deal of effort goes into producing the event, and recognition that survival in the construction industry isn't a thing to be taken for granted, hence the ones who go above and beyond their call of duty should be heartily praised, strengthened and encouraged.

The event is attended by ministers, the chairman of the Histadrut, the chairman of

The Israel Construction and Wood Workers Union is on the global map

The crown jewel of all the Trade Union Division's achievements in recent years is unquestionably signature on an industry-wide collective agreement. This agreement, which equalized the status of all construction workers – Israeli, foreign and Palestinian – was a global precedent and attracted a great deal of attention overseas. At the BWI convention, representatives of the various trade unions applauded the principles of the agreement and asked how the Israeli union managed to pull off a revolution in labor relations, enabling every worker to start with the highest minimum wage in the land

During December 2013, Yitzchak Moyal, Chairman of the Construction and Wood Workers Union was invited by Tevzic Ozelik, the chairman of the Turkish construction industry trade union, to join him at an international congress in Thailand. Moyal was invited to lecture on rights equalization in the Israeli construction industry, following signature on the collective agreement increasing the minimum wage in the construction industry.

This is just one example of the special relations forged in the last four years with trade unions around the world, and of the conferences Moyal attends, as a member of Building and Wood Workers International (BWI), at which he expounds on the achievements of the Israeli industry. BWI holds a number of conferences every year, at which representatives of trade unions from around the world can meet, report, learn of the latest developments in the international industry, acquire new professional knowledge and mainly, swap impressions of achievements and activities, each regarding his own country. Moyal: "The European union representatives were keenly interested in our industry-wide collective agreement, and mainly were astonished at how we managed to persuade the government to ground its status in law. As soon as we proved that our agreement is important to workers, to employers and would stimulate competition in the economy, the state understood that the change was necessary and significant."

Indeed, the interest piqued by the collective agreement didn't remain within the confines of the conventions and conferences. It even led to a special visit to Israel by a BWI delegation, headed by Secretary General Ambet Yuson in 2011. Yuson said that Moyal's reports at the international conferences had stirred his curiosity to visit Israel and learn of the activity being carried out in the industry in person. The BWI delegation visited, among other places, the Construction Technologies College in Holon, meeting college managers and students; toured a construction site where Israelis, Palestinians and foreigners work together, and heard from them about their employment conditions; and dropped by



Shaul Kateb shaking hands with Ambet Yuson, Secretary General of Building and Wood Workers International





Yitzchak Moyal (center) and Sahar Saad, Chairman of the Palestinian Construction Workers Union (on right) at the BWI conference in Geneva

a training program session for workers of the Ackerstein construction company. The delegation members were deeply impressed with the training program and the manner in which safety was being integrated. In that, Israel is ahead of many countries in Europe, they said.

When economics and politics meet...

Alongside plaudits for the agreement and its implementation, at the international conferences he attended over the years Moyal also found interest in the way Israel handles foreign workers, and in the Foundation for

Support and Development of the Construction Field in Israel's activity in social welfare for workers. It turns out that associations based in substance on cooperation between employers' and workers' organizations in organizing the workers, managed as a parity enterprise, is a rarity in the world.

"The agreement we achieved for the industry is the dream of a lot of trade unions that would like to improve employment conditions and pay for their workers, including foreign workers," says Moyal. "Israel is the only one in the world where starting pay in the construction industry

stands at €1,100. It isn't easy to forge a reality that requires employers to pay a high minimum wage and proper social benefits from the first day of work, without discriminating among workers. The fact that we, the State of Israel, don't discriminate against Palestinian workers – who constitute a big proportion of the industry's workers – arouses special interest, regarding the political aspect as well." He often found himself representing not only the Israel Construction and Wood Workers Union but the entire State of Israel, Moyal tells, when urged for response to various reports in the news. "There is a negative, misguided view of Israel in many European countries because of biased reports in the international press. At conferences, we have opportunity to present Israel from a positive perspective. We prove proper care and true concern for the rights of Palestinian workers insofar as possible."

Moyal holds these conferences and meetings in the utmost importance for their contribution to learning, professionalism and for the mutual inspiration they bring. While proudly presenting the collective agreement, he also learned a lot from the experiences of other unions.

"I learn a lot about working methods, cultivating leadership, about social welfare activities and mainly, learn about professional training in Europe," he says. "Construction schools in Europe are an integral part of both lower and higher education there. The subject is established and deeply entrenched from a young age, including creating an academic track. I hope that in Israel, one day we can offer a range of studies in the construction industry starting from high school."

Foreign workers – Equal among equals

The Israeli construction industry employs about 6,000 foreign workers in “wet work”. Most hail from China but there are workers from Romania, Bulgaria and Moldavia too. Beyond translating the collective agreement, which expands and equalizes their rights, into the workers’ native languages, the Construction and Wood Workers Union invests heavily in teaching the workers and helping with their immediate personal needs through service centers

In recent years, since the Histadrut House of Representatives resolution in 2009 allowing foreign workers to join the Histadrut as members, when foreign workers arrive in Israel – their first meeting with representatives of the Construction and Wood Workers Union is at the airport itself. The representatives greet them warmly, give them copies of the collective agreement, which has been translated into six languages, and tell them about the service centers at which they can get assistance with any problem – in the Negev, Rishon Letzion, Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Haifa and the Sharon. The goal: To give them an explanation on their very first day about their rights under the collective agreement, and the services provided by the centers, assisted by translators.

Foreign workers reach Israel through manpower companies. But controversies not solved by the companies reach the parity committees, which include representatives from the Histadrut and the companies. The decision by the Construction and Wood Workers Union to bring foreign workers into its ranks arose from the understanding that they constitute a significant element in the industry and it bore assurance that despite gaps in language and culture, they are not exploited by their employers and are given proper employment conditions, pay, and social welfare activities as are all other workers in the company, under the rights equality anchored in the collective agreement.

“Construction workers need to know they have an address and can fight for their rights,” says Yitzchak Moyal, Chairman of the Construction and Wood Workers Union. “We view them as an important force in leveraging the construction industry, and created special service centers for them with translators. We translated the collective agreement into the required languages and we also invest in advertising in the foreign press. We feel it important to inform them about all the benefits to which they’re entitled in wages, welfare, professional training, outings and more. Also, in order to learn the nature of their work, their culture and their relations with their employer more closely, we hold assemblies in the field, at construction sites. In that matter they receive elaboration of their rights, and we hear about common problems and answer questions.”



Foreign workers have a back in Israel

Indeed, it is clear that in recent years, foreign workers are no mere formal addition to the Histadrut ranks: they take part in social welfare activities, and participate in field days and Outstanding Worker ceremonies. The principle of equality that the Construction and Wood Workers Union promotes, relating to the high minimum wage that all construction workers receive, to premium social welfare terms from the first day of work and to vibrant social activity, applies to foreign workers as well, with the goal of viewing them not as a weak community unable to fight for its rights, but as a community to be cherished for its hard

work and to be protected.

The Construction and Wood Workers Union experienced a striking example of struggle over foreign workers’ rights two years ago, when a foreign manpower federation contacted it, asking to scale back workers’ rights. When the Israeli union refused, the federation approached the Israel National Labor Federation and worked out a collective agreement with it, that prevented foreign workers from entitlement to the benefits deriving from the collective agreement, and lowered their pay relative to the high minimum standard in the Israeli industry, which applied to all workers.

At that, the Histadrut submitted its objection to the agreement to the Economy Ministry, which accepted the objection and voided the agreement with the Israel National Labor Federation as an organization representing foreign workers. The Construction and Wood Workers Union strenuously objected to categorizing foreign workers as a different industry, and to any derogation from their rights. Moyal: “We are an organization that represents the foreign workers in the industry just as we represent workers in other industries. We act to promote their interests and improve their rights. The principle of equality under the collective agreement is a cornerstone to our activity and we will oppose any violation of it.”



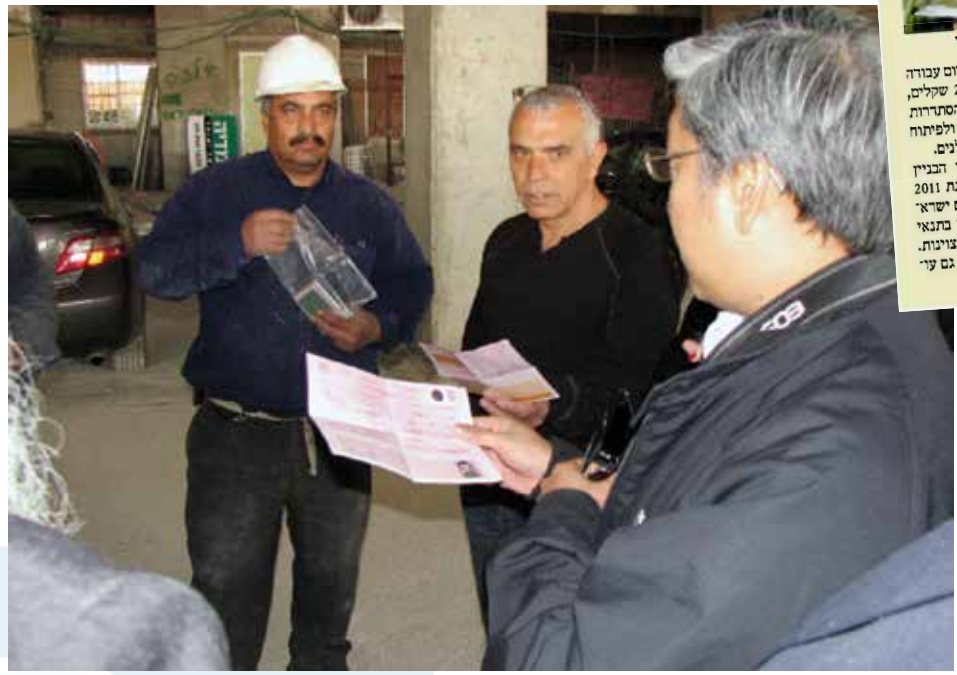


Working to advance the Palestinian workers

One of the clearest changes in the construction industry in recent years is the promotion of equality – under which, all workers of all sectors are entitled to the same benefits and have the same commitments. This principle is especially significant for the 32,500 Palestinian construction workers, who provide for their families with dignity and receive equal opportunity to advance and gain expertise on the job

One of the chief goals laid down in the working plan of Yitzchak Moyal, Chairman of the Construction and Wood Workers Union is to change the image of the construction industry. This goal is in the background of every struggle and every move to instill new arrangements in the industry, and is the cornerstone of the new collective agreement. This agreement, which revolutionized the status of construction workers, is especially important for Palestinian

expand the social welfare and benefits of the workers,” Moyal stresses. “Our concern is for the good of the industry as a whole, and for each and every worker. We will protect anybody whose rights are impaired.” **Service in Arabic** To ensure that equal rights are upheld in practice, the Construction and Wood Workers Union set up four centers around



workers, since it made a huge difference in their earning ability. The minimum wage at which a Palestinian starts as a construction in Israel is ILS 5,000 a month, or ILS 220 for an 8-hour day, double the earning potential of construction workers in the Palestinian Authority. Also, Palestinian workers receive professional training and are invited to conferences, workshops and instruction on safety, exactly the same as Israeli and foreign workers. “The purpose of the agreement, which was of course translated into Arabic, is not just to improve wage terms, but also to

the country to provide legal counsel in Arabic to any worker who suspects his rights are being violated by his employer. It also set up a parity committee whose purpose is to try to bridge disputes before they can reach the courts. Indeed, in recent years an increasing number of employers are being sued by Palestinian workers. Most of the disputes are over labor relations and unfair treatment by the employers. “The parity committees, in most cases, achieve understandings in a single sitting, which is a huge achievement, bringing peace of mind to the worker, who doesn’t

עבודה עברית ערבית

קבלו את מצטיין הבנייה בישראל: פלסטני מחברו

עופר בטרסבורג

מיס העובד המצטיין של ענף הבנייה בישראל יזענק השנה בפעם הראשונה לפלסטני. הארון אלפחילי (42), אב לשמונה מהמפר בניינים שילד חבורו, צבר 27 שנות ניסיון במנייה. את דרכו בפנינים החל כעורך טפסו, וכיום הוא משמש עורך למגזר העבודה האחראי מחסו. בי-19 השנים האחרונות הוא מועסק בחברת “נטע ליפ” שייד, חברת בנייה ותקנה באזור ירושלים. היא זו שהגישה את מועמדותו לפרס.

מצאנו אותו השבוע על הפגיגים במתחם יחודה בבירה, בונה מרכז מסחרי חדש. “אצלנו אין עבודה”, הוא העיד, “אין יום שאני חוזר הביתה ולא פונים אליי צעירים מהמפר ומבקשים שאסדר להם עבודה או אישורים לעבודה בישראל”.

אלפחילי סיפר על יום שרווינו וחס במיוחד מצד החברה, העמיתים ומנהל העבודה, אבל גם על הדרך המפרכת שהוא צריך לעבור מדי יום: זה מתחיל בהשכמה כי לפנות בוקר, כדי למהר ולהגיע לתור הארוך במחסום בית-לחם. כי בשפת המחסום לבריכות ביטחוניות. סביב 6 וחצי הוא מגיע לאתר הבנייה.

27 שנים על הפגיגים. אלפחילי

ילדום. עטא עוויסחאד

have to wait for the courts to rule,” says Moyal. “When equality exists in pay and welfare too, the worker feels he has a secure job, his loyalty and sense of belonging grow and in direct proportion to this, his productivity increases. This way everybody wins – the worker and employer. Some Palestinian workers stay with the same employer over years, advance in rank and feel esteemed. For several years running, we are happy to see **Palestinians among the Outstanding Workers in the industry, who get the same ILS 2,500 bonus at a distinguished ceremony as do all other outstanding workers.**” The equalization in status among construction workers in recent years is not just a precedent-setting achievement in Israel: it also aroused wonder among trade unions around the world. The acknowledgement that Israel, for all its political complexity, does not discriminate against Palestinian workers attracts special interest and a point in its favor in many countries in Europe.

Pensioners are part of the Trade Union Division's agenda

When talking about “Boney Ha’aretz,” the people who built Israel, this is who they are – the pensioners of the construction industry. The times in which they gave the best years of their lives to building Israel were very different from the reality of today, in respect to working methods and the functions and goals of the unions looking out for their rights.

Over the years they experienced Israel's upheavals first-hand, economic and social, which affected the entire economy and the construction and housing industry in particular. In recent years, together with its achievements for workers, the leaders of the Construction and Wood Workers Union haven't overlooked the people who laid the foundations for this strong, established industry in Israel, and offer a great number of social activities for their welfare and to demonstrate appreciation of their life's work

During the last two years, one couldn't help notice that a not-small number of activities initiated by the Construction and Wood Workers Union together with the Foundation for Support and Development of the Construction Field in Israel are also attended by representatives of the older generation in the company industry – the pensioners. Moreover, certain activities are planned specially for them, such as team-building days and trips.

When discussing the construction industry in Israel, starting in the 1930s and 1940s through to the establishment of the state, we see not only the many changes the industry itself has undergone, and the construction companies in particular, but also changes in the trade unions' areas of responsibility and activities. As an industry involving heavy labor, craftsmanship and love of Israel, the leaders of the Histadrut view Israel's retired construction and wood workers as an integral part of the greater family of the construction and wood industry, and accordingly, ascribe great importance to keeping in constant touch and including them in activities.

“Anybody who forgets the past has no present and no future,” emphasizes Yitzchak Moyal, Chairman of the Construction and Wood Workers Union. “The retirees of the construction industry are the founders of the State of Israel, and regrettably, they were forgotten over the years. Our goals are to cultivate contact with them, through representatives in every district, who will take care of their rights, and also through a range of activities.”

That sense of belonging in retirement too

The pensioners of the construction industry know they have an address for any matter. They can get answers on money issues and pension rights at the districts they belong to, or if needed to solve certain problems, at the secretariat of the Trade Union Division, through the Pensioners Committee. They are also invited with their families to the annual outings held by the Construction and Wood Workers Union together with the Foundation for Support and Development of



the Construction Field in Israel. Also, in recent years more social events have been held specifically for pensioners: day-trips around the country, special tours and even outings in style at various sites, such as the Hamei Ga'ash hot springs or the Hamat Gader spa. Each outing is planned down to the last detail, to make the day's success complete with surprise treats, stories, lectures and other quality fun with added value. These initiatives give the pensioners a chance to get together with friends from the past, to meet new friends, to share memories and mainly, to get away from the routine and have fun. Although they don't come to work every day

any more, the pensioners are aware of the changes and innovations in the industry. They are invited to workshops and seminars about topics on the agenda, participate in meetings of the union central committee and in toasts, and even in field days, cheering on the sportspeople and helping to run the contests. “It is important to us to cherish the life work of our pensioners and learn from their experience,” says Moyal, “For instance, as a result of dialog with them, we gained a better understanding how important it is to make suitable pension arrangements for retirement. They teach us how to change and improve for the future generations in the industry.”





A place of honor at construction companies' conferences

The fruitful collaboration between the workers' organization and the employers' organization has generated a number of steps and activities to change the image of the industry and improve the status of construction workers. Both sides believe the greater good of the worker is the greater good of the company, boosting its success and development

Consequent to the collective agreement in the industry, the uniform pay slip and other collective agreements signed at the various companies – Yitzhak Moyal, Chairman of the Construction and Wood Workers Union, is often invited to conferences held at workplaces to lecture on changes in the industry: changes regarding pay and its calculation, pension savings, the new study fund, the parity committee's activity, social welfare, and more.

Moyal: "When employers invited me to lecture and provide information on changes in the industry – from my perspective, that's a big demonstration of faith in our intention, in our actions and in the special collaboration we created with Israel Builders Association - Boney Ha'aretz. Only collaboration of this sort, through the Foundation for Support and Development of the Construction Field in Israel, can lead to historic achievements like we reaped in the last five years. The road remains long, and I believe that this welcome collaboration will mark up significant successes in the next five years too."



A standard pay slip – Transparency in employment terms

The collective agreement in the building industry engendered change in labor relations regarding the calculation of pay and setting new social benefits. To advise of all these novelties in a manner that would be clear to workers and employers alike, it was decided - for the first time in the construction industry - to formulate a standard industry-wide wage agreement, creating clarity and preventing misunderstandings

Three years ago, the Malam Payroll corporation began carrying out a highly important project for the Israel Builders Association - Boney Ha'aretz and the Construction and Wood Workers Union, through the Foundation for Support and Development of the Construction Field in Israel – to formulate and institute a uniform pay slip for the construction industry. The goal: To reflect the excellent employment terms in the collective agreement signed by the parties in 2010.

The initiative was born at the Israel Builders Association - Boney Ha'aretz, after its leaders concluded that many contractors were vulnerable to claims by workers, without realizing it. Since pay-slips were not structured correctly, the potential for misunderstandings that could lead to lawsuits was great. The project was designed give contractors a tool to help them translate the agreement into a correct pay slip, and to obtain up-to-date legal advice from the Malam service offices.

Neta Vaig-Malka, secretary of the national parity committee: "In the framework of the parity committee's work, we were exposed to dozens of pay-slips of workers in the construction and infrastructures industries, and were astonished to see the differences between them. The secretaries of the builders' union in the Histadrut districts reported to us that each contractor does as he pleases regarding pay-slips and that many of the slips do not meet the criteria of Amendment 24 to the Wage Protection Act."

Building trust

Malam held a pilot of the project at the construction companies Gal-Gedera, located in Gedera, and Avner Batat of Petah Tikva. It investigated the structure of the workers' pay and built up-to-date pay slips that implement the principles of the collective agreement and Amendment 24 to the Wage Protection Act. The main mission was to take the pay components from the old agreements, which had lost relevance, and translate them into the new wage structure under the new collective agreement.

At the start of 2012, Israel Builders Association - Boney Ha'aretz, together with the Foundation for Support and Development of the Construction Field in Israel and Construction and Wood Workers Union, held a day of studies on the new pay slip. Representatives of construction companies



Convention to promote employment in construction, and on the principles of the uniform pay-slip, January 2012



from around the country were invited to the seminar, which took place in style at City Tower in Ramat Gan, in order to discuss innovations arising from the collective agreement and to reach common ground on the terms of salary payment, pension insurance, vacation days, calculating overtime, provisions for compensation and insurance coverage, and the rights and duties of workers and employers.

During the conference, the principles of building the new pay-slip were discussed, and

participants asked questions about the subject. Yitzchak Moyal, Chairman of the Construction and Wood Workers Union: "The event was a historic one for labor relations in Israel – an integral part of the comprehensive plan to change the industry's image. During the last year we finished integrating the new standard pay slip in workplaces. When both employer and employee know exactly what they're giving and what they receive, it enhances trust and labor relations become better and more pleasant."



The struggle over the livelihood of the Har Dragot quarry, Even V'Sid

Last summer, the workers of the Dragot Quarry, run by the company Even V'Sid Taasiyot, embarked on a struggle over their livelihood, with the support of the Construction and Wood Workers Union. The campaign began after company management advised them that even though their quarrying permits only expire on November 14, 2014, the Israel Lands Administration was barring them from continuing to operate the quarry. This decision has created uncertainty; the sword of layoffs hovers over the heads of the quarry's 60 workers, and over hundreds of workers in second-circle satellite businesses too

The Nahal Dragot quarry belongs to Taasiyot Even V'Sid, a member of the Readymix group. The quarry, which produces 1.2 million tons a year, has been operating for 33 years and most of its employees hail from the nearest village, Drijat.

Although Even V'Sid meets all its obligations towards the Israel Lands Administration, it has been preventing the company from continuing to quarry at Dragot after its quota for mining the stone was used up. It bears stressing that this quarry supplies, among other things, material for giant contractors such as Ackerstein and Solel Boneh, and its closure in practice could affect them too. The Even V'Sid management suggested to the ILA that it continue to operate the quarry until a new tender is issued, but the ILA has yet to publish a tender. The upshot is that work at the quarry is paralyzed until a decision is made whether to hold a new tender, and if so, until its results are known. Accordingly, the workers have been sent on vacation and their labor committee is considering its organizational moves.

David Farsi, chairman of the Even V'Sid labor committee: "There is a real danger that the workers' employment won't continue. Management told us that if they don't have income, costs will be affected. It's important to state that we have no claims against the management, since being organized, we have among the best wage terms in the industry. But the ILA decision certainly will affect us and we mean to fight it to the end."

In light of the situation, Yitzchak Moyal, Chairman of the Construction and Wood Workers Union, contacted Housing Minister Uri Ariel, warning of the implications of the ILA's decision not only for workers but for the execution of national projects, and for satellite industries that supply services to these projects.

In his letter, Moyal listed the big bodies in Israel that rely on the aggregate and asphalt produced at Dragot. He also noted that the high quality of the raw materials required for the projects together with the shortage in suitable stone resources in the south prove that closing down Dragot fails to pass the



The Even V'Sid National Union, with workers, at the Dragot quarry

test of reality.

Moyal also warned that closing down Dragot could rattle some very central players in the infrastructure and real estate industries, cause prices to rise and deal a death-blow to national projects.

Moyal: "The ILA decision is very strange. It isn't clear what lies behind it. Because there's no tender, contractors and construction companies could wind up looking for raw materials from dubious elements, possibly even beyond the Green Line. I am disturbed by the fact that there is no protection of workers and their rights

there like at Taasiyot Even V'Sid, which has a collective agreement and meets all its obligations to workers. It is important to stress that over 50% of the workers live in Drijat, the village next to the quarry, and if the quarry closes they won't have anywhere to work. These are people who have been with the company for many years. I call on the ILA to expedite the tender process and find a way for the Dragot Quarry not to close. Otherwise, it will affect the jobs of the quarry workers, and also have a horizontal effect on the company's customers."

The struggle that saved 500 families - We managed to save Phoenicia from closing

In August 2012, the Phoenicia plant in Zipporit sank into crisis, and the threat of collapse and 500 jobs lost hovered. The Histadrut set out on an uncompromising battle to save the workers' livelihood, to keep the glass kiln burning, and for the sake of the pride of the periphery. This battle was different in nature, focusing on determined protest activity against the government and its failure to meet its commitments. "The decision fell to do what it takes to save the livelihood of hundreds of workers, and we succeeded," tells Yitzchak Moyal

The date August 8, 2012 is engraved in the memories of 500 Phoenicia workers. That day, they were called together by Phoenicia CEO Eran Haimovich, who warned that the company was in serious crisis and was in danger of closing down. The announcement, which fell out of the blue, was the green light to the start of an uncompromising battle. A battle against the threat that workers who had given their soul day and night, for low pay, would be fired. A battle against closing down the northern glass plant – one of the flagships of Israeli industry and exports.

The backdrop to the threatening closure and layoffs lies in a trend of recent years. The flat glass industry was suffering from constantly rising energy prices. Since 30% of Phoenicia's manufacturing costs were on the energy (fuel oil) required to heat the glass kiln – which operates 24 hours a day, its energy costs came to ILS 100 million a year. If the plant had been connected to the national gas conduit as the government promised instead of having to use fuel oil, it could have saved tens of millions of shekel s a year and its collapse could have been prevented.

On top of the government breaking its commitment to link the plant to the gas grid, Phoenicia was also contending with difficulties following the intense global crisis, leading it to accrue debt that crossed the 300 million-shekel mark. These circumstances led the court to order a stay of proceedings against the company.

Upon learning of the threat to the plant, all the elements in the Histadrut joined forces, including the Construction and Wood Workers Union, the Trade Union Division, the situation rooms, the spokesman's office and regional chairman Leon Peretz, to help the workers prevent the plant from closing down and their dismissal.

"The decision was made to do everything we could to save the livelihood of hundreds of workers," tells Yitzchak Moyal, Chairman of the Construction and Wood Workers Union. "We came to the plant, convened the workers and labor committee, clarified the dimensions of the danger and said that battle should be enjoined, including protests against the plant's closing down on the one hand, and knocking on door in government on the other hand.

The workers were bewildered. They weren't



used to taking part in demonstrations, and had never had a labor dispute at the plant. Ultimately, they understood that to avert closure, big steps had to be taken, mainly against the state which shook off its commitment to link the plant to the gas system."

A situation room headed by Jihad Akel was

established at the Histadrut for the struggle, and an orderly plan was built, based on parallel activities along several channels.

On top of talking with the media, the labor committee was instructed on how to conduct a struggle, and the workers were consolidated into an elite team. Heavy pressure was also brought to bear on politicians, which



thanks to the intervention of the chairman of the Histadrut at the time, Ofer Eini, led to a substantial breakthrough - a solution that reversed the plant's course and led to its acquisition. Yitzchak Moyal, among the team managing the

battle on the ground, adds and stresses: "This battle was different from any other. It wasn't a battle against an employer or plant owner, but against the government and economic forces. We had to contend with the government declining to fulfill its own commitment to

connect Phoenicia to the gas pipeline by 2010. This plant has people who give it their lives, and it's very hard physical labor. I have had the opportunity to meet people who worked here 40 years. Where is a 55-year old that did this his whole life supposed to go?"

Fighting on all fronts

The battle plan included, as said, activity along a number of avenues: protests outside government buildings in Tel Aviv, demonstrations outside the Knesset and even blocking intersections. Together with intensive activity in the field, a fierce battle was also carried out over Facebook, where each day messages were posted reminding the government of its commitment to care for the workers and their families, and find a solution to allow them to continue making a living in dignity. Another significant avenue of activity was in cabinet and Knesset. The person in charge of this was Shlomo Yifrah, coordinator between the Construction and Wood Workers Union and Knesset. In the course of his activity, Knesset members and ministers visited the plant, with the Histadrut delivering one key message: Unemployment is the government's enemy No. 1, and the dismissals would be a heavy economic burden on the state. Between the visits to the plant and the many discussions held with decision-makers, two crucial visits took place that led to a breakthrough in the struggle. One was by Uzi Landau, then the minister of Infrastructures, who raised the idea of temporarily trucking compressed gas until the plant could be connected to the pipeline. The other was by Moshe Gafni, the then chairman of the Knesset Finance Committee, who urged the Finance Ministry to find suitable guarantees regulating the gas supply, and held up transfers of ILS 35 million for the gas supply system until a solution to the crisis had been found. Support from Knesset members from all parties in favor of keeping the plant open, numerous discussions in the Knesset's Finance and Economic Affairs committees, and with intensive work in the field brought about the great achievement: in October 2012 the government passed a resolution to connect the plant to the gas system by 2014 (it has been done), and meanwhile, the job could be done with condensed gas tankers. Meanwhile, a new investor was found, the Fortissimo fund, and a collective agreement was signed by the Amakim regional office and Trade Union Division, and the labor committee of the plant. The agreement assured the workers' rights, including their seniority and pay levels. As part of the acquisition agreement, about 50 employees were dismissed, of whom most left voluntarily. Moyal: "In contrast with the last time, this was a commitment with a new buyer, that received the imprimatur of court. We turned over every rock, did everything it took so the workers wouldn't pay the price of the broken commitment. In the end, we see this arrangement as a great success - we saved hundreds of families, enabling them to continue making a living in dignity."

Signing agreements, improving terms of employment

Alongside the breakthrough the Construction and Wood Workers Union achieved with the government's consent to provide about ILS 90 million needed for the "Israeli Builders" venture to continue, and hire and train thousands of Israelis in construction, the Construction and Wood Workers Union constantly works at instituting proper labor relations. Proof of its action is in the many agreements improving the status of workers in construction, wood, ceramics, glass, stone and the quarries around Israel

As part of the trade unions' actions to improve the image of the industry and the opportunities it can offer its workers, labor committees were set up at construction companies where there had been no representation beforehand, and with their collaboration, collective agreements were signed that righted wrongs in pay terms, and organized labor relations. After years of uncertainty, workers have a representative on their behalf in the Histadrut, an address and a champion guarding their rights. "The agreements at the plants give peace of mind to employee and employer," says Yitzchak Moyal, Chairman of the Construction and Wood Workers Union. From his perspective, "Workers need to know they can advance professionally and there's somebody looking out for them regarding pay and social welfare. In the years to come, we will continue to recruit more companies to update agreements, to build new agreements when necessary and to organize labor relations."

Among these agreements signed at companies over the last five years:

Phoenicia Yeruham – Last June, after a protracted negotiation, an excellent agreement was achieved with significant pay increases, to the surprise of all the workers. The agreement included a pay raise of 3.5% to 4% a year for all workers, sector-based pay raises, extension of seniority additions, and also upgraded social conditions and various working procedures.

Even V'Sid (Readymix) – At the end of 2013, an agreement was signed with the plant management, including significant pay raises and increased provisioning for pension savings. This agreement also placed an emphasis on the pay and pension terms of veteran workers, making sure their pay wouldn't erode.

Solel Boneh, of the Shikun & Binui group – Several agreements were signed at this company over the last three years. One was a unique agreement – the first in the industry – designed to anchor the principles of safety at construction sites by defining the powers of function holders, and establishing a



Signing the agreement at Even V'Sid



Signing collective agreements at Ashkelit 268 and Netivei Noy - of the Ashtrom Group



From right: Dan Pinchasi of Clal Insurance, Uri Rubin and Yitzchak Moyal sign a pension agreement for the Construction industry



From right: Nissim Bublil, President of the Boney Haaretz union, Ofer Eini, Chairman of the Histadrut, and Yitzchak Moyal sign the collective agreement increasing wages.

parity committee. This agreement puts an emphasis on the employer's commitment to provide instruction and guidance to workers on using personal protection equipment. Responsibility under the agreement is mutual: workers also commit to a culture of safety on the job.

Two other agreements signed were new collective agreements for the sector of heavy machinery operators, and the sector of plant workers: industrialized construction works, cement works and the manufacture of construction aids. The agreement with these

workers included better pay, better value per work hour and organizing advancement in rank, subject to the collective agreement. The agreement with the heavy machinery workers included better pay, and bigger provisioning for pension savings.

Construction workers in the Israel Police

– As of writing negotiations are underway to revise a special agreement, subject to the terms of the collective agreement. The negotiations aim to narrow gaps, streamline advancement possibilities for workers, and also, to organize pay raises and

compensation for extra shifts.

Ytong - A collective agreement is about to be signed to organize advancement possibilities for workers in pay rank, and increase provisioning into study funds.

Regba – Last June, an agreement was signed with the company's management, organizing pay raises over the next three years and significantly increasing the percentage of provisioning into study funds and pension savings. The agreement also improves the rate of pay for extra shifts.

Ackerstein – Last February, the collective agreement was amended to improve the employment terms of about 350 workers in the company's plants around the country – Yeruham, Ashdod and Rosh Pina. The agreement included a seniority-based pay raise and improvements in the terms of premiums and vacation.

Negev Ceramics – In January 2012, the collective agreement was updated to bring workers a 4.6% pay raise each year for three years. The agreement also included an increase in the sum of the "culture basket" per worker, a one-time bonus worth 65 hours to be paid through six months, and a higher-education fund estimated at about ILS 100,000 that the company would set aside for the workers.

Ashkelit 268 and Netivei Noy, of the Ahtrom group – During 2013, labor committees were appointed at these plants on behalf of the Histadrut, and for the first time, special collective agreements were signed to organize employment terms and labor relations, including of course improvement in pay, social benefits and more.

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