Pharoah's Story: The Decision-Making Power of a Leader

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Every individual comes to a point in his or her life where decision-making is necessary. The remarkable thing about God is that He offers us the power of choice rather than merely giving us orders. Indeed, some decisions are more important than others, but God is happy when we listen carefully to His instructions. Decision-making has been present since the beginning of the universe (Gen. 1–2) when God felt the need to create both living and nonliving organisms. After He had created these things, He concluded that what He made was "good."

Decision-making is crucial, especially where sound or rational choices are needed to improve management. Managers must make decisions both consciously and subconsciously; this is vital to the managers' role. Decisions are carried out to sustain businesses' operations and enhance organizational functioning (Ejimabo, 2015). The corporate choice at every management level ensures that companies achieve their goals. This article focuses on applying biblical teachings and the use of power and decision-making within groups and organizations. Organizational behavioral theories show how the biblical example of Pharaoh in Exodus 5 applies to these theories.

Pharaoh's Decisions, Use of Power, and Resultant Consequences

Pharaoh was Egypt's leader, and as such, he had the authority and power to control Egypt and its people. According to Exodus 5–11, Pharaoh made many wrong choices. Above all, he failed to recognize the power of God; because of this, when he saw proof of God's power (for example, when Aaron's staff turned into a snake), he perceived the miracles to be magic. Pharaoh made his magicians imitate those miracles.

Pharaoh was also unable to understand God's provision. He did not see how releasing his Israelite slaves would be of importance to Egypt's ultimate

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well-being. Only the dramatic duel between Pharaoh and Moses, as illustrated by the ten plagues that befell the Egyptians, convinced the king to let the Israelites leave Egypt (Exod. 7:14–10:29).

However, Pharaoh resisted until the very last plague (Exod. 11:1–10). He did not comprehend the significance of freedom and human dignity, and this lack of comprehension was the real reason behind his refusal to allow the Jews to leave Egypt. His heart was hardened (Exod. 7:3), resulting in his stubborn behavior. Even after seeing evidence of God's existence with his own eyes, his refusal to reform revealed his arrogance. It seems that Pharaoh lacked the skill of self-evaluation, bringing trouble to both himself and his nation. He failed to realize that the oppressed slaves were part of God's plan to save humankind. Yet despite Pharaoh's resistance, God's plans were not shaken. Instead, Pharaoh's failure to submit to God resulted in suffering for both his family and his nation, and ultimately, the loss of his life. An effective leader uses self-confidence, among other traits, to gather and analyze information regarding the situation at hand. Pharaoh's power, as well as his decision-making capabilities, is an example of poor leadership.

Leaders and Decision-Making

A decision is defined as choosing one option from several alternatives (Vroom & Yetton, 1973). The selection process will inevitably lead to one alternative—either the right or wrong course of action—which will enhance or disrupt the achievement of the desired goal. Everything a leader does is carried out through decision-making. Leaders settle every action relating to planning, directing, organizing, controlling, and coordinating through decisions that are put into practice by the workforce of an enterprise. The entire managerial process is based on decisions the leader makes. These choices are required to tackle problems, as well as maximize the advantages of the opportunities presented. The right choices minimize complexities and uncertainties in the business environment (Vroom & Yetton, 1973). Unfortunately, Pharaoh failed to analyze his alternatives clearly before making the final choice. As a leader, he did not help move his kingdom in the right direction of goal achievement.

Leaders are responsible for making choices and approving decisions that are carried out to fulfill the goals and objectives of an organization. Decision-making allows managers to decide on matters within an organization, including selecting what tools or resources to use and which people to carry out particular tasks. The planning process requires leaders to enhance effectiveness by continuously reviewing their decisions. Managers decide upon work division, structure, responsibility, and the processes by which to establish them.

Types of Problems

Decisional matters fall into two different groups: programmed or non-programmed problems. Programmed problems are routine, well-founded, repetitive, and easily identifiable; thus, programmed problems utilize an easy, straightforward solution. However, non-programmed problems are of a non-routine, non-repetitive nature. Unique, complex, or urgent issues are typically remedied in a non-programmed way (Soelberg, 1967, pp. 3–16). Here, every problem needs individual attention, evaluation, and analysis before the best alternative is selected. In Pharaoh's case, Moses and Aaron's request to let the Israelite slaves go was a unique scenario (i.e., non-programmed).

As a leader, Pharaoh wrongly exercised his power when he followed his council's advice to enslave and oppress the Jews to prevent them from becoming too influential or powerful (Exod. 1:8–11). Pharaoh minimized the Hebrews' freedoms and forced them to work under his taskmasters' harsh supervision. The Israelites were forced to build cities, construct roads, erect monuments, and make tiles and bricks. Yet, the more the Israelites were oppressed, the more their population increased. This resulted in another wrong decision from Pharaoh; in response to the growing Israelite population, he ordered the Hebrew midwives to kill all male babies (Exod. 1:15–16). Pharaoh hoped that this plan would eliminate the danger that the Israelites' increasing numbers posed. Amid their oppression and slavery, God heard His people's cries and sent Moses to rescue them from Pharaoh.

As previously discussed, non-programmed decisions involve novel or new situations, for which there is no specific answer to use as a guide (Soelberg, 1967, pp. 3–16). As a result, leaders are forced to make unique decisions. It may take a longer time to make these decisions, for all the variables must be weighed and facts obtained to avoid making wrong, harmful, or detrimental choices. The information present is ordinarily incomplete, making it difficult for a leader to anticipate the results of his or her decision. The nature of this non-programmed problem was outside of Pharaoh's realm of knowledge, and, as a result, he made a wrong judgment (Plous, 1993). His heart was hardened, and he denied the Israelites' request to worship the Lord (Exod. 5:1–2). He used his intuition to deal with this unique and unexpected problem, yet this increased his household and his country's difficulties.

The Decision-Making Style of Pharaoh

Today, many researchers acknowledge the advantage of rational instead of intuitive decision-making. They believe that the intuitive ways of solving problems belong to the category of an irrational realm, exceeding the research scope. Pharaoh relied more on intuition. Intuition is an essential factor that

facilitates behavioral decisions and also extends to rationality and logic. Recent research has shown that intuition in decision-making is significant and exceedingly important (Sadler-Smith & Shefy, 2004, p. 76). Intuitive decision-making is applicable where data clarity is inadequate and ambiguous. There is no prior information to act as a guiding principle for any upcoming decisions. It is also present when time pressure is a factor and in non-routine scenarios that demand a specific approach. The more the uncertainty and number of independent factors, the more complex choices become, thus making intuitive judgment unreliable (Cafferky, 2012).

Rational decision-making uses logic and objective, well-analyzed data instead of relying on intuition and subjectivity to aid in problem-solving and goal achievement (Simon, 1979, p. 494). It is an efficient model that aids in identifying the problems at hand and choosing the best option between numerous alternatives. As a rational decision-maker, Pharaoh would have been expected to verify the issue at handspecifically Moses's request to rescue the Israelites from the suffering they were experiencing at the Egyptians' hand). After doing so, Pharaoh should have examined multiple solutions before selecting the one that would be most beneficial to his nation. By extending the pool of his potential solutions, he realized that it was not every day that God sent a person to come and rescue a nation.

Moreover, God's power, as demonstrated by in the ten plagues, should have made him realize that the Power he was facing was beyond his human authority. It is possible that if he had realized this, he would have determined that the best solution was to let the Israelites go to avoid further punishment from God (Exod. 7:14–10:29). However, Pharaoh's irrational decision to go after the Israelites after releasing them resulted in destruction.

Many leaders use intuition, while others combine intuitive and rational approaches to develop a desirable outcome (Simon, 1979, p. 494). In fact, many entrepreneurs owe their success to correctly used intuition. People with this intuitive skill are shown to have greater financial success than those who use logic. Intuitive thinking can be an accurate and powerful tool when applied in rational analysis, especially where complex matters are concerned. As a result, this approach is not always wrong and can be employed to help make the right decisions. However, intuition effectiveness is related and amplified by a high level of expertise.

Unfortunately, with no verification or logical analysis, intuition may manifest itself in fear, prejudices, and stereotypes, leading to unfavorable outcomes (Dane, Rockmann, & Pratt, 2012, p. 187). Pharaoh failed to factor in God's power and His influence when it came to liberating the Israelites. He relied only on his intuition, which was biased due to his hardened heart; this

resulted in severe consequences, including his firstborn son's loss. He viewed the release of the Israelites as a loss of his workforce.

Why did Pharaoh choose not to use a rational approach in making his decision? Had he used such an approach, he would have understood that the people he had enslaved were God's chosen nation. Despite his best efforts, Pharaoh had failed to control their population; additionally, he saw that the Israelites were protected from the plagues that befell the Egyptians. The act of protecting the Israelites from the plagues was evidence enough to reveal that the power of God was with them (Exod. 7:14–10:29).

Power in Decision-Making

According to Fast, Sivanathan, Mayer, and Galinsky (2011, p. 58), power influences decision-making, and where overconfidence among power holders occurs, the decisions made lead to detrimental consequences. Decision-making with little information limits performance and the ability to utilize and maintain power. This, in turn, harms all involved: the stakeholders, the company, and society at large. With Pharaoh, his overconfidence and use of force led to detrimental impacts on his life, family, and nation. Power can also make leaders overestimate their decisions' accuracy, leading to overconfidence in one's knowledge. Although power increases performance in some cases, it also requires careful consideration and use of a charismatic voice to facilitate change.

Based on the organizational behavioral concept, there is a relationship between business and human behavior, which increases workers' productivity and efficiency. Quain (2018) claims that organizational behavioral (OB) theories utilize scientific interaction principles within an organization to manage workers by analyzing their diversity; this, in turn, affects decision-making. Based on the human relations behavioral approach, organizations function well when workers feel empowerment and value (Quain, 2018). This theory focuses on the study of workforce productivity under different workplace scenarios. It posits that workers are more likely to improve efficiency and productivity when they feel valued and satisfied in the workplace. For instance, if a company meets workers' needs, they are more likely to be happy with their jobs and show an increased sense of loyalty, which boosts productivity (Ivancevich, Matteson, & Konopaske, 2013).

In Pharaoh's scenario, the Israelites were forced into working; they were oppressed and required to carry out complicated tasks such as building monuments, road construction, and brick production. This use of force severely decreased their job satisfaction, such that they cried to God (Exod. 3:7). When job satisfaction is low, productivity, effectiveness, and survival of an organization are limited.

As a leader, Pharaoh should have exercised his power more effectively to ensure that the Israelites were not overworked. Assigning tasks based on competency and avoiding work overload could have helped achieve this. Paying the Israelites for the work (as opposed to oppressing them as slaves) could have motivated them to continue working for him without complaints. Yet Pharaoh overworked and enslaved the Israelites.

Despite the Israelites crying out to God, Pharaoh continued to exercise his power wrongly; in fact, he overburdened them with *more* work to limit their multiplication. He also failed to comprehend the culture of Israelites. A leader is expected to understand the employees' culture to know them and ensure that effective decision-making occurs (Huffman, Hipp, Pankake, & Moller, 2014, p. 448); culture is vital in determining the successful execution of decisions. The Israelites were a chosen nation, and they needed time to worship their God (Exod. 3:19-20).

Pharaoh's decisions were not made for the good of his workers. Use of ethics in decision-making is vital to increase the workers' trust and dedication and avoid future issues. Had Pharaoh been an ethical leader, he would have identified the reason behind the Israelites' complaints and problems regarding ethical guidelines, laws, and regulations. Then, after looking into the possible courses of action, Pharaoh would have selected and executed the best decision to increase his workers' morale while favoring human dignity (Pfeffer, 1981, p. 404).

Had Pharaoh been a better communicator, he could have helped solve conflicts between the Israelites and their Egyptian taskmasters. Communication is a vital tool in decision-making, as it helps make policies clear and ensures proper daily operations in organizations (Ejimabo, 2015). However, by being a poor communicator, Pharaoh created a less than favorable working environment for the Israelites; thus, the Israelites' poor treatment was because of his leadership incompetence (Fiol, Pratt, & O'Conner, 2009, p. 33). Had he been a more effective communicator, Pharaoh would have likely used more face-to-face communication with the workers to gain their trust and enhance transparency in their work matters (Yukl, 2013). As a result, mutual trust and respect would have emerged.

Team building could have helped create an environment where skills, abilities, and diverse backgrounds worked together to solve problems and accomplish goals. Instead, Pharaoh used an autocratic style of leadership. He was in control; every decision was based on his judgment and ideas without seeking advice from employees (Ejimabo, 2015). Pharaoh controlled every aspect of his nation, including work the Israelites carried out and the way in which others (including the Israelite midwives and the Egyptian taskmasters) interacted

with his slaves. Pharaoh's leadership style shows that the workers had little or no input in the decisions made; as such, the Israelites faced a work environment that was very rigid and highly structured.

Conclusion

As Egypt's leader, Pharaoh had the ability and power to make wise decisions and ultimately save his nation from tragedy. However, instead of using the correct leadership style to motivate and lead the Israelites, he embraced ignorance and disobedient behavior; this ultimately led Pharaoh to make irrational decisions. He failed to clearly discern the situation at hand, comprehend the ongoing issues, or use listening skills to determine what the Israelites were enduring. All of this led to Pharaoh's ineffectiveness as a leader. His use of an autocratic leadership style discouraged the Israelites, resulting in further reduced morale and motivation.

This gross mistreatment caused the Israelites to cry to God to come to their rescue. Had Pharaoh utilized proper leadership knowledge, he could have changed his nation for the better instead of destroying it. He misused his power by inflicting pain and oppression upon the Hebrews, which made God angry; he also refused to allow the Israelites time to worship their God. In this way, Pharaoh undermined God's power and, because of this, he lost his kingdom, his firstborn son, and ultimately, his own life.

The story of Pharaoh and his poor example of leadership should serve as a reminder to current leaders to be good decision-makers, use rational thinking to solve organizational problems and guide their organization with an ethical, moral hand to achieve their goals. As stated in Philippians 4:8, leaders should heed decisions that are honorable, pure, righteous, and aligned with God's principles.

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