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# *Intellectual Discourse*

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polite, but did not consider it necessary to vote in return other than to offer an appreciative smile or a thank you. Some religiously inclined voters did accept the money but were not sure if the money is religiously sanctioned (*halal*) or forbidden (*haram*). Hence, they used the money to buy petrol or cooking fuel rather than food or drink that would enter their bodies. Finally, some voters accepted payments, particularly from incumbents, considering it to be their own money stolen by government officials (pp. 246-247).

These interesting findings are scattered throughout this very accessible volume and are well-worth reading. All the contributors focus on a set of common questions and follow the same methodological approach. They all noted the use of tactics and strategies by candidates that are common to an electoral system. Noticeably, there was a remarkable absence of electoral violence even in areas where people have long suffered from civil strife. They all reported the prevalence of money politics, patronage politics, and clientelism in the Indonesian electoral system. They lamented the prevalence of weak and frail structure of the political parties. The central finding of this edited volume is that the relationship between candidates and voters is defined by 'money politics'. Not simply that the candidates dish out money to win elections, voters also expect candidates to give them something tangible. It has been highlighted that the deployment of money does not guarantee electoral success. However, those who refrain from playing money politics end up losing the election. Money is distributed through various intermediaries, including leading figures from the local mosques or church. A summary of these findings in a concluding chapter would certainly have augmented the value of the book.

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**The Accidental Executive: Lessons on Business, Faith and Calling from the Life of Joseph. By Albert M. Erisman. Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2015, pp. 202. ISBN 978-1-61970-621-7.**

Reviewer: The late Muhammad Arif Zakaullah, formerly of Kulliyah of Economics and Management Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia.

The story of Joseph (Prophet Yūsuf, son of Prophet Ya‘qūb) features prominently in the scriptures of all three Abrahamic faiths (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) and is well known to humanity at large. The story is about 3500 years old, and much has been written about it over the millennia. Albert M. Erisman, in his book *The Accidental Executive: Lessons on Business, Faith and Calling from the Life of Joseph*, brings a unique perspective to business by drawing on Joseph’s career as a CEO (i.e. the Minister of Economy) of Egypt. The author highlights that he was raised in a deeply religious Christian family, and had heard and read this story many times from his childhood onward.

However, his awakening to the deeper meaning of the story was triggered by a real incident in his own professional career. He was the Head of Applied Research at Boeing, where 180 people worked for him. In November 1987, his new boss at Boeing told him that starting the New Year he and his entire research team would be reporting to one of the author’s colleagues in the organization, and not to any of the higher bosses. “In short I was being demoted” is how the author felt about this change (p. ix). The environment created by this new organizational arrangement was very discouraging for the culture and the special needs of the research division. As a result, almost 25 percent of the highly qualified researchers left the company (p. xi). In fact, the author himself considered leaving Boeing. He got a job offer to be CEO of a company in another part of the country. He sought God’s guidance to help him make a decision and discussed the matter with his Pastor, who advised him to stay at Boeing. Right around that time, his Pastor discussed the story of Joseph in one of the sermons. The author reflected on the story and found similarities between the issues he was facing at Boeing and the story of Joseph. “Joseph, through no fault of his own, found himself sold into slavery, falsely accused by his boss, and put into prison. While he was in prison he did two things. First, he worked hard and honorably. He was appointed to be in charge of all the other prisoners and was completely trusted by the jailer. Second, even while he did this, he never missed the opportunity to send a message out of prison stating that he was there because he was falsely accused, and he wanted out” (p. xi).

So the author did not leave Boeing and continued to work hard and with diligence. In November 1988, things changed for the better when the colleague who had been made his boss was reassigned and the author

(as the Head of research) was asked to report to the higher bosses again. Even when things improved for the author his interest in the story of Joseph did not dim. He was now trying to comprehend Joseph's career as a business executive and as a leader, because as the Minister of the Egyptian economy, Joseph played a crucial role in saving the people of Egypt from starvation during a prolonged and devastating famine.

The author approaches the study of Joseph's career by dividing it into two phases. The first phase was the phase of slavery. As a slave, he was at the bottom of the organization and had no ability to choose his assignment. The second phase was in his capacity of the Minister of the Economy of Egypt. In this capacity, he planned the strategy to save the Egyptian people from starvation during the prolonged famine and successfully executed that strategy.

From Joseph's career as a leader the author identifies three levels of insight. The first is about moral questions related to work, where money, sex and power can overcome a business leader. He notes that while dealing with failure often is the subject of much discussion and analysis, dealing with success is no less a challenge, and character flaws can be fatal for the careers of highly successful business leaders. Despite enormous power, prestige and financial reach, Joseph never allowed any temptation to overwhelm him. He managed his success with great focus, patience and self-discipline. His exemplary character enabled him to be a role model for others and inspired them to do their best. The second level of insight pertains to Joseph's understanding about the "technical aspects of business, leadership, planning and execution" (p. 4). The book argues that the planning stage is very different from the execution stage. When planning, one can change whatever one wants to change and can keep constant whatever one wants to remain unchanged. One can even make multiple hypothetical plans A, B, C, etc. But during the execution stage, change is the only constant, and most things are beyond one's control. Given these realities, Joseph's successful implementation of his plans was no mean feat - just imagine if you took the contemporary world's top CEO and transported him (through a time tunnel) to the world 3500 ago, and assigned him the task of dealing with the Egyptian famine! At the third level, the author argues that "Joseph's story offers good insights into the big questions for people in business: finding a career, seeing meaning in our work, and building the bridge between our faith and our work" (p. 5).

The author expresses his concern that nowadays it is not uncommon for people in leadership positions to follow one set of values in their places of worship and another set of values when making business decisions and policies as CEOs and leaders. This behavior shows a total lack of integrity. He states that while integrity requires honesty, doing what you say you will do and telling the truth, the full meaning of integrity encompasses much more than this. To him, integrity means wholeness. In fact, the word ‘integrity’ shares the same root as ‘integer’ and ‘integration’. Indeed, integer refers to whole numbers, while integration brings things together into one. Thus, “wholeness is the key for a business leader as well. Living the same life at work as at home avoids the problem of leaving values at home when the leader goes to work. Integrity doesn’t allow the people of faith to leave that faith, that call on their lives, outside the door of the office. Gaining wholeness, we will find, was vital for Joseph – and it is vital for us” (p. 5).

Wholeness in the character of leaders also includes their commitment to human dignity and equality, and the story of Joseph powerfully underscores this fact. Joseph was not an Egyptian. His race, religion, ethnicity and color of skin were different from those of the Egyptians, and to top it all, he was a slave. Yet the Pharaoh did not discriminate against him (or later against his family) and made him the Minister of Economy with enormous power and authority. As a result of this legitimate appointment, he was accepted by the masses, leaders and officials of the country, and they cooperated to implement his plans and policies. By appointing Joseph, a non- Egyptian and a slave, the Pharaoh demonstrated that he was actually following the fundamental principle of wholeness which says that all humans are created in the image of God (Hebrew Bible, Genesis 1:27) and that humans are the best of all creations (Qur’ān, 95:4). But a few centuries later, other Pharaohs made the Israelites scapegoats, discriminated against them and made them slaves. So when it comes to wholeness which is inclusive of human dignity, justice, fairness and equal opportunity, the tone at the top matters.

It is this wholeness in the career of Joseph – whether as a slave, as an inmate or as a CEO – that is the focus of the book. Over the years the author has served in numerous capacities – from the corporate world to academia – and his research interests and curiosity have led him to interview more than a hundred corporate leaders from around the world,

including the CEOs of many Fortune 500 companies. This book weaves neatly those experiences and insights throughout the analysis and shows the relevance of Joseph's corporate decisions and character to the challenges faced by contemporary leaders. This cumulative wisdom enriches the analysis and broadens one's horizons beyond the calculus of immediate gratification or profit maximization.

The book illustrates its ideas by discussing the case of Johnson and Johnson's Tylenol recall, when seven people who had used Tylenol (extra strength) died in the Chicago area between September 29 and October 1, 1982. Even though Tylenol was J&J's top selling product, the company recalled 31 million bottles of the drug, and halted its production, distribution and advertising. The author states that he interviewed J&J's retired CEO, Ralph Larsen and asked why the company had made such a drastic decision. His answer was that this decision was made in the public interest. In Islamic terminology, public interest is known as *maslahah*, and is the basis of all governance and decision making, whether in the spheres of business, politics, culture, entertainment, etc. The objective of *maslahah* is to preserve life, reason, religion, property, and future generations. It aims at protecting and promoting what is good for society, and preventing what is harmful. As Erisman cogently demonstrates in his case study of Joseph's career, responsible business leadership commits to advancing public interest unconditionally.

In sum, Albert Erisman's book is an important contribution to the literature not only in business ethics, leadership and governance, but also in scriptural studies. It is a must read for business students and leaders who are looking for lasting success and meaning in their work and life.

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**Religion, Culture, Society: Readings in the Humanities and Revealed Knowledge. Edited by Mohammad A. Quayum and Hassan Ahmed Ibrahim. Kuala Lumpur: Silverfish Books, 2017, pp. 287. ISBN 978-983-3221-64-6.**

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