

Shmuz #125 Business Ethics



Tiferes
Bnei
Torah

ספר בראשית פרק מב

(ו) וְיוֹסֵף הָיָה הַשְּׁלִיטָה עַל הָאָרֶץ הוּא הַמְּשַׁבֵּיר לְכָל עַם הָאָרֶץ וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶתְּיוֹסֵף וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לוֹ אַפַּיִם אֶרְצָה

And Yosef was the ruler over the land; he was the provider to all the people of the land, and the brothers of Yosef came and bowed down, full face to the ground.

ספורנו עה"ת ספר בראשית פרק מב פסוק ו

(ו) הוּא הַשְּׁלִיטָה עַל הָאָרֶץ הוּא הַמְּשַׁבֵּיר. עִם הַיּוֹתֵם הַשְּׁלִיטָה הִיָּה הוּא בַעֲצֻמוֹ הַמוֹכֵר וְלֹא הִיָּה מֵאֲמִין בַּעֲבָדָיו כִּי אֲמֵנָם הִיָּה הַכֶּסֶף רַב מְאֹד וְרֵאוּי לַפְּרֵעָה כְּאֲמָרוֹ וַיָּבֵא יוֹסֵף אֶת הַכֶּסֶף בֵּיתָה פְּרֵעָה וְלִכְּנֹן לֹא הִיָּה שׁוֹם בַּר נִמְכַר לְקוֹנֵימָם בְּלֹתֵי חוֹתְמוֹ אוֹ כְּתָב יָדוֹ

He was the ruler over the land; he was the provider – With Yosef as the ruler, he was also the very person who sold the grain. He didn't trust his servants because the money was very great and fit to go to Pharaoh. Therefore no grain was sold without Yosef's signature or handwriting.

Background:

The Seforno is bothered by the double expression used in the Pasuk: **Yosef was the ruler, he was the provider**. The Seforno answers that this actually teaches us a significant concept: not only was Yosef the ruler of Mitzraim, he was literally the provider because no grain was sold without his signature. Since there was so much money involved in the selling of the grain, and all of it was fit to go to Pharaoh, no single sale of grain took place during the seven years of famine unless Yosef personally signed off on it.

Question:

Isn't this an inefficient method of doing business? Granted, it may have saved Pharaoh some money, but what about the sheer amount of time that Yosef had to be standing around, signing every document? Didn't Yosef have better things to do with his time? He certainly had much Torah to learn and his own family to teach. Additionally, Pharaoh had more than enough money. Yosef should have been entitled to say, "I will work hard, but why should I kill myself? Just so this Egyptian king should have extra wealth?"



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If you have questions or comments please feel free to e-mail me at Rebbe@TheShmuz.com