



Purim

Family first

Which biblical character am I referring to?

He was catapulted overnight from relative anonymity to become second only to the king. In fact, there are two correct answers to this question: Mordechai and Joseph.

Mordechai, who is featured so prominently in the Megillah story that we will shortly be reading on Purim, and Joseph, who is described in the book of Bereshit as being a Hebrew who suddenly became second only to Pharaoh in Egypt.

When you come to think of it, these two characters have far more in common than it might initially appear. Both were born in the land of Israel and then exiled. Both were paraded on the king's chariot in public, and both were given a ring to wear on their finger by the king.

At the end of the Megillah, the concluding verses describe five outstanding attributes of Mordechai. Interestingly, these same qualities can also be applied to Joseph.

What were those attributes?

We're told, "Mishneh lamelech, Achashverosh" - Mordechai was second only to the king. This was also true of Joseph.

"Vegadol laYehudim" – he was great for the Jewish people. The members of his faith took pride in him. This was true of both Mordechai and Joseph.

"Veratzui lerov echav" – he was popular amongst most of his brethren. A great leader can't be universally popular, because tough decisions sometimes negatively affect people. That certainly was the case with Mordechai. However, it is a tribute to him that he was still popular amongst

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most people. The one biblical character who, more than anybody else, knew what it was like to be despised and hated by some was Joseph, particularly in the midst of his family.

"Doresh tov le'amor" – he sought only the best for his people. Both Mordechai and Joseph, while being in the court of the king, were determined that it would always be a priority to do the best for their own people.

But the final accolade is one which I believe is the most important of all:

About Mordechai, we are told, "Vedover shalom lechol-zar'o" - he spoke in peaceable terms to his family. He was determined to get along with his family, because in his eyes, regardless of what he was doing, his family would always come first. This was also true of Joseph. Despite the fact that members of his family were guilty of attempted fratricide, Joseph was determined for the rest of his life to bond with his family and do the best for them.

Therefore, at this Purim time, there is a powerful and wonderful message that emerges from the similarities between these two great biblical characters. And that message is simple yet profound: Whatever we are doing in life, whatever our position or occupation – our family must always come first. It is within the family circle that we can achieve the most for the continuity of our faith and the betterment of our world.

Shabbat Shalom and Purim Sameach!