The Role of Writing in the Book of Esther

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Text 1: Esther 1:22

וַיִּשְׁלָח סְפָרִים אֶל־כָּל־מְדִינָוֹת הַמֶּׁלֶךְ אֶל־מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה כְּכְתָבֶּה וְאֶל־עַם וָעָם כִּלְשׁוֹגֵוֹ לְהְיָוֹת כָּל־אִישׁ שֹׁרֵר בְּבֵיתוֹ וּמְדַבֵּר כִּלִשִׁוֹן עַמִּוֹ: פ

Dispatches were sent to all the provinces of the king, to every province in its own script and to every nation in its own language, that every man should wield authority in his home and speak the language of his own people.

Text 2: Esther 9:29-32

²⁹ וַתְּכָתֹב אֶסְמֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה בַת־אָבִיתַיִל וּמָרְדָּבֵי הַיְּהוּדָי אֶת־כָּל־תִּקֶף לְקַיֵּם אַת אָגֶרֶת הַפּוּרֵים הַזָּאֹת הַשַּׁנְית: ³⁰ וַיִּשְׁלֵח סְּפָרִים אֶל־כָּלְבּיִים אָל־שָׁבַע וְעָשָׁרִים וּמֵאָה מְדִינָה מַלְכָּוּת אֲשִׁעְרֵוֹשׁ דְּבְרֵי שָׁלִוֹם וֲאֱמֶת: ³¹ לְקַיֵּם אָת־יָמֵי הַפָּרִים הָאָלָה הָלְכָּה מַלְכָּה מַמְלָּה וְנִאָשָׁר קִיְּמָוּ עַל־נִפְשָׁם וְעַל־זּרְעֻם דְּבְרֵי הַצִּמְוֹת הָאֵלֶה וְנִכְּהָב בַּסְּפֶר:

12 מְּאַשָּׁר אֶסְתָּר קִיַּם דְּבָרֵי הַפָּרִים הָאֵלֶה וְנְכָהָב בַּסְּפֶר:

²⁹ Then Queen Esther daughter of Abihail wrote a second letter of Purim for the purpose of confirming with full authority the aforementioned one of Mordecai the Jew. ³⁰ Dispatches were sent to all the Jews in the hundred and twenty-seven provinces of the realm of Ahasuerus with an ordinance of "equity and honesty:" ³¹ These days of Purim shall be observed at their proper time, as Mordecai the Jew—and now Queen Esther—has obligated them to do, and just as they have assumed for themselves and their descendants the obligation of the fasts with their lamentations. Esth. 9:32 And Esther's ordinance validating these observances of Purim was recorded in a scroll.

Text 3: Esther 3:21-23

בּיָמִים הָהֶׁם וּמָרְדָּכֵי וֹשֵׁב בְּשְׁעַר־הַמֶּלֶךְ קַצַף בִּאָלָן וָתָרָשׁ שְׁנֵי־סָריסֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ מִשֹׁמְרֵי הַפֹּף וַיְבַקְשׁוּ לִשְׁלְּט לָּדְ בַּמֶּלֶךְ אָסְתֵּר הַמַּלְבֶּה וַתְּאֹמֶר אָסְתֵּר לַמֶּלֶךְ בְּשֵׁם מְרְדֵּכֵי: 23 וַיִּבָקְשׁׁ הַּדָּבֶר וַיִּמָּצֹא וַיִּתְּלוּ אָסְתֵּר הַמַּלְבָּה וַתְּאֹמֶר אָסְתֵּר לַמֶּלֶךְ בְּשֵׁם מְרְדֵּבֵי: 23 וַיִּבָקְשׁׁ הַדְּבֶר וַיִּמָּצֹא וַיִּתְּלוּ שִׁירַתְי בּּסֶפֶּר דְּבְרֵי הַיָּמִים לְּפְנֵי הַמֶּלְךְ: פּ שְׁנִיקָן וַיְּבָּחְשׁׁׁיִּי בַּסְפֶּר דִּבְרָי הַיָּמִים לְפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ: פּ

²¹At that time, when Mordecai was sitting in the palace gate, Bigthan and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs who guarded the threshold, became angry, and plotted to do away with King Ahasuerus. ²² Mordecai learned of it and told it to Queen Esther, and Esther reported it to the king in Mordecai's name. ²³ The matter was investigated and found to be so, and the two were impaled on stakes. This was recorded in the book of annals at the instance of the king.

Text 4: Esther 6:1-2

בּלֵיָלָה כּהֹוּא נָדְדָה שְׁנַת כּמֶּלֶךְ נִיּאֹמֶר לְהָבִّיא אֶת־סֵפֶּר כּזּּכְרֹנוֹת דּבְרֵי כּיָמִים נִיּהְיָוּ נִקְרָאָים לִפְנֵי כּמֶּלֶךְ נִיּּאֹמֶר לְהָבִּיא אֶת־סֵפֶּר כּזּכְרֹנוֹת דּבְרֵי כּיָמִים נִיּהְיָוּ נְקָרָאִים לְפָנֵי בּמֶּלֶךְ אֲטִיּת בָּמְלֶךְ מִשְׁמְרָי בַּמֶּלְרְ מִשֹׁמְרָי בַּמֶּלְרְ מִשְׁמְרָי בַּמְּלֶרְ מִשְׁמְרָי בַּמְּרָ בְּמְשׁרְלִישׁ:

¹ That night, sleep deserted the king, and he ordered the book of records, the annals, to be brought; and it was read to the king. ² There it was found written that Mordecai had denounced Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs who guarded the threshold, who had plotted to do away with King Ahasuerus.

Text 5: Esther 3:12-13

12 וַיִּקֶּרְאוּ סֹפְרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ בַּחָדֶשׁ הָרִאשׁוֹן בִּשְׁלוֹשָׁה עָשֶׁר יוֹם בּוֹ וַיִּכָּתַב בְּכָל־אֲשֶׁר־צְוָּה הָאָّן אֶל אֲחַשְׁדַּרְפְּנֵי־הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאֶל־ הַפַּחוֹת אֲשֶׁר ו עַל־מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה וְאֶל־שֶׁרִי עַם וָעָׁם מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה בְּכָתַבְׁה וְעַם וָעָם כִּלְשׁוֹנִוֹ בְּשָׁב הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲחַשְׁרִשׁ נְכָּהִרּיִם מִנְּעֵר וְנֶחְתָּם בְּטַבַּעַת הַמֶּלֶךְ: 13 וְנִשְׁלוֹחַ סְכָּרִים בְּיָד הָרָצִים אֶל־כָּל־מְדִינְוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהַשְׁלִדְ לְחָדֶשׁ שְׁנֵר לְחָדֶשׁ שְׁנִים־עָשֻׁר הוּא־חָדֶשׁ אָדֵר וּשְׁלָלָם לְבְוֹז:

¹² On the thirteenth day of the first month, the king's scribes were summoned and a decree was issued, as Haman directed, to the king's satraps, to the governors of every province, and to the officials of every people, to every province in its own script and to every people in its own language. The orders were issued in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed with the king's signet. ¹³ Accordingly, written instructions were dispatched by couriers to all the king's provinces to destroy, massacre, and exterminate all the Jews, young and old, children and women, on a single day, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month—that is, the month of Adar—and to plunder their possessions.

Text 6: Esther 9:20-22

²⁰ וַיִּכְתָּב מֶרְדֵּכָּי אֶתְ־הַדְּבָרָים הָאֵלֶה וַיִּשְׁלֵּח סְפָּרִים אֶל־כִּלֹ־הַיְּהוּדִּים אֲשֶׁרֹ בְּכָל־מְדִינוֹת הַמֶּלֶהְ אֲחַשְׁוֵלוֹשׁ הַקְּרוֹבִים וְיִשְׁנָה: ²² וְיִּכְתוֹים בּיְהוּדִים בְּיִהוֹת עשִׁים אֵת וִוֹם אַרְבָּצֶה עָשָׂר לְחָדֶשׁ אֲדָׁר וְאֶת יוֹם־חָמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר בְּּכְל־שָׁנָה וְשְׁנֵה: ²² כַּיָּמִים אֲשֶׁר־נָחוּ בָהֶם הַיְּהוּדִים מֵאְוֹיְבֵיהֶם וְהַחֹּדֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר נָהְפַּּךְ לָהֶם מִיָּגוֹן לְשִׁמְחָה וּמֵאָבֶל לְיָוֹם טֻוֹב לַצְשְׁוֹת אוֹתָם יְמֵיׁ מְשְׁתֵּה וְשְׂמָהָה וּמְאֶּלֶוֹח מֻבּוֹת אֵישׁ לְרֵעָּהוּ וּמְתָּנִוֹת לַאָבִיוֹנֵים:

²⁰Mordecai recorded these events. And he sent dispatches to all the Jews throughout the provinces of King Ahasuerus, near and far, ²¹ charging them to observe the fourteenth and fifteenth days of Adar, every year— ²² the same days on which the Jews enjoyed relief from their foes and the same month which had been transformed for them from one of grief and mourning to one of festive joy. They were to observe them as days of feasting and merrymaking, and as an occasion for sending gifts to one another and presents to the poor.

Text 7: Esther 9:29

29 נַתְּכָתִּב אֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה בַת־אֲבִיתֵיל וּמַרְדָּבֵי הַיָּהוּדָי אֶת־כַּל־תְּקֶף לְקַיֵּם אֵת אָגֶרֶת הַפּוּרֵים הַזְּאֹת הַשְׁנִית:

²⁹Then Queen Esther daughter of Abihail wrote a second letter of Purim for the purpose of confirming with full authority the aforementioned one of Mordecai the Jew.

Text 8: Esther 9:1

וּבִשְנֵים ۠עָשָּׂר חֹדֶשׁ הוּא־חָדֶשׁ אֲדָּר בִּשְׁלוֹשָׁה עָשָׁר יוֹם בֹּוֹ אֲשֶׁׁר הִגְּיעַ דְּבַר־הַמֶּלֶךְ וְדָתֻוֹ לְהַעָשֻוֹת בַּיּּוֹם אֲשֶׁר שִּבְּרוּ אֹיְבֵי הַיְהוּדִים לִשְׁלִוֹט בָּהֶם וְנַהַפְּוֹךְ הוּא אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁלְטִוּ הַיְהוּדֵים הַמָּה בְּשֹׂנָאֵיהָם:

And so, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month—that is, the month of Adar—when the king's command and decree were to be executed, the very day on which the enemies of the Jews had expected to get them in their power, the opposite happened, and the Jews got their enemies in their power.

Text 9: Esther 4:13-17

13 ניָאמֶר מֶרְדָּכֵי לְהָשִׁיב אֶל־אֶסְתֵּר אַל־חִּדְמֵּי בָנַפְשֶׁךְּ לְהָמָלֵט בֵּית־הַמֶּלֶךְּ מִכֶּל־הַיְּהוּדִים: 14 כֵּי אִם־הַחָרֵשׁ תַּחַרִישׁי בָּצֵּת הַזֹּאת רָנַח וְהַצֶּלֶה יַעֲמֶוֹד לִיְהוּדִים מִמֶּקוֹם אַחֶׁר וְאָתְּ וּבֵית־אָבֶיף תִּאבֵדוּ וּמֵי יוֹדֵע אִם־לְעַת כָּוֹאת הָגַּעַתְּ לַמַּלְרָוּת: ¹⁵ וַתְּאמֶר אֶסְתַּר לְהָשֵׁיב אֱל־מִרְדָּכֵי: 16 לֵךְ כְּנוֹס אֶת־כָּל־הַיְּהוּדִּים הַנִּמְצְאִים בְּשׁוּשָׁן וְצִוּמוּ עָלִי וְאַל־תּאֹכְלוֹּ וְאֵל־תִּשְׁלְשֶׁת יָמִיםׂ לֵיִלָה וָיֹוֹם גַּם־אָנִי וְנַעֲרֹתַי אָצִוּם בֵּן וּבְכֵּן אָבְוֹא אֶל־הַמֶּּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר לְא־כַּדָּת וְכִאֲשֶׁר אָבַדְתִּי אָבַדְתִּי: 17 וְיַּעֲבָּר מָרְדָּבֵי וַיַּעשׁ כָּבָּל אֵשֶׁר־צִוּתָה עַּלָיִו אָסְתֵּר: ס

¹³ Mordecai had this message delivered to Esther: "Do not imagine that you, of all the Jews, will escape with your life by being in the king's palace. ¹⁴ On the contrary, if you keep silent in this crisis, relief and deliverance will come to the Jews from another quarter, while you and your father's house will perish. And who knows, perhaps you have attained to royal position for just such a crisis." ¹⁵ Then Esther sent back this answer to Mordecai: ¹⁶ "Go, assemble all the Jews who live in Shushan, and fast in my behalf; do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maidens will observe the same fast. Then I shall go to the king, though it is contrary to the law; and if I am to perish, I shall perish!" ¹⁷ So Mordecai went about [the city] and did just as Esther had commanded him.