Yim Chun-ning (116647)

OT751 Isaiah
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Lesson 10 Essay: Discuss an interesting feature of the text.

An interesting feature of the text in this week's portion of Isaiah is the use of volitives (jussive, cohortative, imperative) to create a tone of "earnest appeal". (Oswalt, 601) This feature is found in Chapter 55, which Constable describes as "one of the warmest gospel invitations in the whole Bible" (Constable, 394). Chapters 52-4 reveal God's amazing salvation plan, and here it is an urgent call to all who desperately need it. Oswalt observes that at least twelve imperative or jussive verbs occur in the first seven verses of Chapter 55. (Oswalt, 601) In fact, the opening verse alone uses the imperative form six times:

הוֹי כָּל-צָמֵא לְכוּ לַמַּיִם, וַאֲשֶׁר אֵין-לוֹ כָסֶף; לְכוּ שִׁבְרוּ, וְאֱכֹלוּ, וּ|לְכוּ שִׁבְרוּ בְּלוֹא-כֶסֶף וּבְלוֹא מְחִיר יַיִן וְחָלָב

"Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost." (Isaiah 55:1)

In Biblical Hebrew, the imperative is used to present positive commands and requests in the second person. (Williams' Hebrew Syntax 188) In this verse, readers are repeatedly invited to "come!" (לכו), "buy!" (שברו), and "eat!" (אכלו). It is a direct and earnest invitation in the second person plural form. The imperative verb "come" appeared three times, the last of which is connected with a waw. Imperatives can connect with waw to demonstrate purpose or result (Williams' 189). Here, the message is extremely strong, "come, come! Come so that you can eat wine and milk without money!"

Other verbs in the form of volitives in Isaiah 55 include listen (שמעו) (Isa55:2, 3), incline (הטו) (your ear) (55:3), seek (דרשו) (the Lord) (55:6), call upon Him (קראהו) (5 5:6), and return (ישב) (to the Lord) (jussive[1]) (55:7). As Constable points out, Chapter 55 is the climax of the salvation section (Ch. 49-55) in Isaiah (Constable, 394). The intensive use of imperatives and jussives creates a fitting tone that demonstrates God's passionate invitation towards the helpless humanity. He has done what we could not do to give us abundant life, and He desires us to "come!"

[1] Jussive is used to express a desire, command, or request in the third person. (Williams' 184-5)