

OT751 Isaiah  
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**Lesson 11 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 the adversative **כי** to bring out the difference between the earthly realities and the new realities. After the announcement that He will create new heavens and a new earth in Isaiah 65:17, God describes the new world. Oswalt points out that "the earthly realities give shape to the new realities" but the tragic elements of this world will not be repeated there. (Oswalt, 687) In verses 20-23, a pattern of **לא-כי** continuously appears for three times, highlighting the replacement of curses with blessings.

Isa 65:20	<b>לא-יהיה</b> מִשָּׁם עוֹד, עוֹלַיִם וְזָקֵן, אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יִמְלֵא, אֶת-יָמָיו: <b>כי</b> הַנֶּעַר, בֶּן-מֵאָה שָׁנָה יָמוּת, וְהַחוּטָא, בֶּן-מֵאָה שָׁנָה יִקְלָל	Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; the one who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere child; the one who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed.
65:21	וּבְנוּ בָתִּים, וַיִּשְׁבוּ; וַיִּטְעוּ כִרְמִים, וַאֲכָלוּ פְרִיָם	They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit.
65:22	<b>לא</b> יִבְנוּ וְאַחֵר יֹשֵׁב, לֹא יִטְעוּ וְאַחֵר יֹאכֵל: <b>כי-כימי</b> הָעֵץ יָמֵי עַמִּי, וּמַעֲשֵׂה יָדֵיהֶם יִבְלוּ בְחַיָּי	No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat. For as the days of a tree, so will be the days of my people; my chosen ones will long enjoy the work of their hands.
65:23	<b>לא</b> יִגְעוּ לְרִיק, וְלֹא יִלְדוּ לְבִהְלָה: <b>כי</b> זָרַע בְּרוּכֵי יְהוָה, הַמָּה, וְצִאֲצָאֵיהֶם, אִתָּם	They will not labor in vain, nor will they bear children doomed to misfortune; for they will be a people blessed by the Lord, they and their descendants with them.

The Hebrew word **כי** often denotes a causal clause, but when it is used after a negative word such as **לא**, it can function as the beginning of an adversative clause, bearing the meaning of *but rather*, *but instead*, etc. (Williams' Hebrew Syntax, 447) Here, **לא** is used to deny certain tragic scenarios: early death, hard work without reward, and the lack of future hope (a ruined future generation). The following **כי** clause announces what will be in place of such: longevity, enjoying the reward of work, and blessed descendants.

In their captivity, the Israelites lamented that God had hidden His face from them (Isa 64:7), but God responded by saying that He reveals Himself even to those who did not seek Him (65:1) and that He will create something new and bring hope to His suffering people (65:17-18). The use of the adversative ו highlights this message of hope. The tragic realities of this world will be replaced. There is a Chinese saying that “extreme joy begets sorrow”, but in God’s new creation, we can finally rejoice without any weeping. (Isa 65:19)