

**Eshet Chayil -**

**Praising a Woman of Valor**

*Eshet Chayil* (“a woman of valor”) consists of the concluding section of the book of Proverbs (31:10-31). On the surface, *Eshet Chayil* appears to be a eulogy to the “perfect wife,” though most commentators believe it represents an idealized allegory, variously interpreted to refer to the Shechinah, Shabbat itself, the Torah, wisdom, or the soul.

The Hebrew word *eshet* is the construct form of *isha* (woman), and *chayil* connotes bravery (Ps. 76:6); capability (Prov. 12:4); triumph (Ps. 118:15); a rampart (Ps. 84:8); or wealth (Prov. 13:22). The *eshet chayil* then represents virtues of courage and strength.

Traditionally, this entire passage is recited by the husband before Kiddush on Friday evenings. After the Shabbat candles are lit (but before the meal is eaten), the wife is praised and the children are then blessed.

This poem displays an acrostic arrangement (i.e., Aleph, Bet, Gimmel) so that the verses begin with the letters of the Hebrew alphabet in regular order:

א

אשת-חיל מי נימה רוחק מפוניים מكهرباء:

Eshet-chayil mi yimtza v'rchok mip'ninim mikrah
A woman of valor who can find? She is far more precious than jewels.

ב

בשת ביה לב משלה ישלא לא חמס:

Batach bah lev ba'lah v'shalal lo yechsar
The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain.
Eshet Chayil – a Woman of Valor

G'malat-hu tov v'lo-ra kol y'mei chayeha
She does him good, and not harm, all the days of her life.

Darshah tzemer ufshtim vata'as b'tchefetz kapeiha
She seeks wool and flax, and works with willing hands.

Haitah ko'oniyyot socher mimerchak tavi lachmah
She is like the ships of the merchant; she brings her food from afar.

Vatakam b'od lailah vatiten teref l'vetah v'chok l'na'aroteiha
She rises while it is yet night and provides food for her household and portions for her maidens.

Zam'mah sadeh vatkachehu mp'ri chapeiha nat'ah karem
She considers a field and buys it; with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard.
Chagragh v’oz motneiha vat’ametz z’ro’oteiha
She dresses herself with strength and makes her arms strong.

Ta’amah ki-tov sachrah lo yichbeh balailah nerah
She perceives that her merchandise is profitable. Her lamp does not go out at night.

Yadeha shildah v’achashor v’chapeiha tamchu felech
She puts her hands to the distaff, and her hands hold the spindle.

Kapah parsah le’ari v’yadeiha shildah la’evyon
She opens her hand to the poor and reaches out her hands to the needy.

Lo-tira l’vatah mishaleg ki chol-betah lavush shanim
She is not afraid of snow for her household, for all her household are clothed in scarlet.
Mar vadim astah-olah shesh v’argaman l’yushah
She makes bed coverings for herself; her clothing is fine linen and purple.

Noda bash’arim ba’alah b’shivto im-ziknei-aretz
Her husband is known in the gates when he sits among the elders of the land.

Sadin astah vatimkor vachagor natnah lak’na’ani
She makes linen garments and sells them; she delivers sashes to the merchant.

Oz-y’hadar l’yushah vatischak l’yom acharon
Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come.

Pihah patchah v’chochma v’torat chesed al-l’shonah
She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.
Eshet Chayil – a Woman of Valor

Tzofiah halichot betah v’lechem atzlut lo tochel
She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness.

Kamu vaneha ray’ash’ruha ba’lah ray’ha’llah
Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her:

Rabot banot asu chayil v’at alit al-kulanah
"Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all."

Sheker hachen v’hevel hayofi ishah yir’at-Adonai hi tit’halal
Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.

T’nu-lah mip’ri yadeiha viall’luha vash’arim ma’aseha
Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates.
Eshet Chayil - A Woman of Valor

A woman of valor who can find? She is far more precious than jewels.
The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain.
She does him good, and not harm, all the days of her life.
She seeks wool and flax, and works with willing hands.
She is like the ships of the merchant; she brings her food from afar.
She rises while it is yet night and provides food for her household and portions for her maidens.
She considers a field and buys it; with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard.
She dresses herself with strength and makes her arms strong.
She perceives that her merchandise is profitable. Her lamp does not go out at night.
She puts her hands to the distaff, and her hands hold the spindle.
She opens her hand to the poor and reaches out her hands to the needy.
She is not afraid of snow for her household, for all her household are clothed in scarlet.
She makes bed coverings for herself; her clothing is fine linen and purple.
Her husband is known in the gates when he sits among the elders of the land.
She makes linen garments and sells them; she delivers sashes to the merchant.
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