



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, Gimme) so that the verses begin with the letters of the Hebrew alphabet in regular order:



א

אֵשֶׁת־חַיִל מִי יִמְצָא וְרָחֹק מִפְּנִינִים מִכְרָה:

Eshet-chayil mi yimtza v'rachok mip'ninim mikhrah

A woman of valor who can find? She is far more precious than jewels.

ב

בָּטַח בָּהּ לֵב בַּעֲלָהּ וְשָׁלַל לֹא יַחְסָר:

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.



ג

גַּמְלַתְהוּ טוֹב וְלֹא־רָע כָּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיהָ:

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



ד

דָּרְשָׁה צֹמֶר וּפְשִׁטִים וַתַּעַשׂ בְּחַפְזָא כַּפֵּיהָ:

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

ה

הִיְתָה כַּאֲנִיּוֹת סוֹחֵר מִמֶּרְחָק תָּבִיא לַחֲמַה

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



ו

וַתִּקָּם בְּעוֹד לַיְלָה וַתִּתֵּן טָרֵף לְבֵיתָהּ וְחֶק לְנַעֲרֹתֶיהָ:

Vatakom 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.

ז

זָמְמָה שָׂדֵה וַתִּקְחֶהּ מִפְּרֵי חַפֵּיהָ נָטַע כַּרֶּם:

Zam'mah sadeh vatikachehu mip'ri chapeiha nat'ah karem
She considers a field and buys it; with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard.





ח

חַגְרָה בְּעוֹז מִתְנִיָּה וַחֲאַמֵּץ זְרֹעוֹתֶיהָ:

Chagrah v'oz motneiha vat'amez z'ro'oteiha
She dresses herself with strength and makes her arms strong.

ט



טַעֲמָה כִּי־טוֹב סַחְרָה לֹא־יִכָּבֵה בַּלַּיְלָה נֶרָה:

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

י

יָדֶיהָ שִׁלְחָה בְּכִישׁוֹר וְכַפֵּיהָ תִּמְכּוּ פֶלֶךְ:

Yadeha shilchah vakishor v'chapeiha tamchu felech
She puts her hands to the distaff, and her hands hold the spindle.

כ

כַּפָּה פָּרְשָׁה לְעָנִי וַיָּדִיחָה שִׁלְחָה לְאַבְיוֹן:

Kapah parsah le'ani v'yadeiha shil'chah la'evyon
She opens her hand to the poor and reaches out her hands to the needy.



ל

לֹא־תִירָא לְבֵיתָהּ מִשָּׁלֵג כִּי כֹל־בֵּיתָהּ לַבָּשׁ שָׁנִים:

Lo-tira l'vetah mishaleg ki chol-betah lavush shanim
She is not afraid of snow for her household, for all her household are clothed in scarlet.



מ

מַרְבָּדִים עֲשֵׂתֶה-לָּהּ שֵׁשׁ וְאַרְגָּמָן לְבוּשָׁה:

Marvadim astah-lah shesh v'argaman l'vushah
She makes bed coverings for herself; her clothing is fine linen and purple.

נ

נוֹדָע בַּשְּׁעָרִים בְּעֵלָה בְּשִׁיטּוֹ עִם-זִקְנֵי-אֶרֶץ:

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

ס

סָדִין עֲשֵׂתָה וְתִמְכֹר וַחֲגוֹר נַתַּנָּה לְכַנְעֵנִי:

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



ע

עֹז־וְהַדָּר לְבוּשָׁה וְתִשְׁחַק לְיוֹם אַחֲרוֹן:

Oz-v'hadar l'vushah vatischak l'yom acharon
Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come.



פ

פִּיהָ פָּתְחָה בְּחָכְמָה וְתוֹרַת-חֶסֶד עַל-לְשׁוֹנָה:

Piha patchah v'chochma v'torat chesed al-l'shonah
She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.



צ

צוֹפִיָּה הַלִּיכּוֹת בֵּיתָהּ וּלְחֶם אֲטִלּוּת לֹא תֹאכַל:

Tzofi'ah halichot betah v'lechem atzlut lo tochel

She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness.

ק

קָמוּ בָנֶיהָ וַיְאָשְׁרוּהָ בַעֲלָהּ וַיְהַלְלָהּ:



Kamu vaneha vay'ash'ruha ba'lah vay'hal'lah

Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her:

ר

רַבּוֹת בָּנוֹת עָשׂוּ חַיִּיל וְאַתְּ עָלִית עַל-כֻּלָּנָה:



Rabot banot asu chayil v'at alit al-kulanah

"Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all."

ש

שֶׁקֶר חַחֵן וְהַבֵּל הַיָּפִי אִשָּׁה יִרְאַת־יְהוָה הִיא תִתְהַלֵּל:

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.

ת

תְּנוּ-לָהּ מִפְּרֵי יָדֶיהָ וַיְהַלְלוּהָ בְּשַׁעְרִים מַעֲשֵׂיהָ:

T'nu-lah mip'ri yadeiha vihal'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.

Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come.

She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.

She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness.

Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her:

"Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all."

Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.

Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates.





אשת חיל

אֶשֶׁת־חַיִּיל נִי יִמְצָא וְרַחֵק מִפְּנִינִים מִכָּרָה:
בָּמַט בָּהּ לֵב בַּעֲלָהּ וְשָׁלַל לֹא יִחָסֵר:
גִּנְזָלְתָּהּ טוֹב וְלֹא־דָרַע כֹּל יָמֵי תַיִתָּה:
דָּרָשָׁה צְנוּר וּפְשָׁטִים וַתַּעַשׂ בַּחֲפִין כַּפִּיָּה:
הִיָּתָה כְּאֵנִיּוֹת סוֹחֵר מִמֶּרְחָק תָּבִיא לַחֲמָה
וַתִּקֶּם בְּעוֹר לִילָה וַתִּתֵּן טָרֶף לְבֵיתָהּ וְחֵק לְנַעֲרֹתֶיהָ:
זָמְנָה שָׂרָה וַתִּקְחָהּ מִפְּרֵי כַּפִּיָּה נֹטַע כָּרִם:
חֲנָה בַעֲזוֹ מְתַנֶּיהָ וַתֵּאֱמִין זְרַעוֹתֶיהָ:
טָעְנָה כִּי־טוֹב סָתְרָה לֹא־יִכְבֶּה בְּלִילָה גֵרָה:
יָדִיהָ שִׁלְחָה בְּכִישׁוֹר וּכַפִּיָּה תִמְכּוּ פֶלֶךְ:
כָּפָה פָרָשָׁה לַעֲנֵי וַיָּדִיָּה שִׁלְחָה לְאֲבִיוֹן:
לֹא־תִירָא לְבֵיתָהּ מִשְׁלַג כִּי כָל־בֵּיתָהּ לְבַשׁ שְׁנַיִם:
מִרְבָּדִים עָשְׂתָה־לָּהּ שֵׁשׁ וְאַרְגָּמָן לְבוּשָׁה:
נֹדַע בְּשַׁעֲרִים בַּעֲלָהּ בְּשִׁבְתּוֹ עַם־זַקְנֵי־אֲרָץ:
סָרִין עָשְׂתָה וַתִּמְכַּר וַתַּחְנוּר נָתַנָּה לְכַנְעָנִי:
עֲזוּהָרָר לְבוּשָׁה וַתִּשְׁתַּק לַיּוֹם אַחֲרוֹן:
פִּיהָ פָתְחָה בְּחִכְמָהּ וַתּוֹרַת־חֵסֶד עַל־לְשׁוֹנָה:
צוּפִיָּה הִלִּיכֹת בֵּיתָהּ וּלְחֵם עֲצֻלוֹת לֹא תֹאכַל:
קָנְוָה בְּנִיָּה וַיֵּאֱשְׁרוּהָ בַּעֲלָהּ וַיִּהְלָלָה:
רַבּוֹת בָּנוֹת עָשׂוּ חַיִּיל וְאֵת עָלִית עַל־כַּלְנֶה:
שָׁקַר הַחַן וְהַבֵּל הַיָּפִי אִשָּׁה יִרְאֵת־יְהוָה הִיא תִתְהַלָּל: