


Eishet Chayil is taken from the closing chapter of the Biblical book *Mishlei* (Proverbs). In particular, it represents Shabbat, which is referred to in the feminine form in Hebrew and also represents the tremendous potential of Jewish women. The Midrash (early rabbinic teaching) on *Mishlei* uses examples of Jewish heroines which it relates to the sentences which make up *Eishet Chayil*.

For example, the phrase, '*rabot banot asu chayil*' – many women have excelled in strength – is explained by the Midrash as referring to Ruth the Moabitess, after whom the Biblical book of Ruth is named. Ruth was a widow who gave up the prospect of a comfortable life in Moab, a hostile neighbour of the Jewish people, but instead decided to follow her widowed mother-in-law Naomi, her chosen family, back to Israel to live life as a fully-fledged Jew.

Such strong commitment to Judaism is reflected by so many women today, particularly in Israel where the clouds of war still hover ominously.

Exemplars of this commitment are Yael Eshel whose sister Roni z'l was murdered at the Nachal Oz base, and Yuval Marciano, whose sister Noa z'l was abducted from the Nachal Oz base and murdered in Gaza by Hamas terrorists. Despite this terrible trauma, both Yael and Yuval enlisted in the IDF infantry. Whilst not all women can serve as Yael and Yuval do, every woman's contribution to maintain Israeli society, families and communities is critical and provides an essential service to the country. Women who empower are women who inspire. Our singing of *Eishet Chayil* every Shabbat provides us with a weekly reminder of this.



7–8 FEBRUARY 2025
US WOMEN'S SHABBAT
ESHET CHAYIL
STRENGTH OF WOMEN
אִשֶּׁת חַיִּיל

The *Eishet Chayil* prayer, found in Proverbs 31:10-31, celebrates the virtues of women, of their strength and wisdom.

An *Eishet Chayil* (Woman of Valour) is highly valuable, far surpassing material wealth, and brings good to her family. Her work ethic is strong; she is hardworking, resourceful, and provides for her household with care and diligence. She is generous to the poor and prepared for challenges, ensuring her community is cared for. Her wisdom and dignity shine, and her teachings are kind. She maintains a positive outlook and her efforts are recognized and praised by those around her. Ultimately, it is her fear of God, not superficial charm or beauty, that earns her true honour and praise.

אִשֶּׁת חַיִּל מִי יִמָּצָא. וְרַחֵק מִפְּנִינִים מְכָרָה:

בָּטַח בָּהּ לֵב בַּעֲלָהּ. וְשָׁלַל לֹא יַחֲסֹר:

גִּמְלָתָהּ טוֹב וְלֹא רָע. כָּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיהָ:

דִּרְשָׁה צָמֵר וּפְשָׁתִים. וְתַעֲשֶׂה בַּחֲפֶז כַּפִּיהָ:

הֵיטָה פְּאֻנִיּוֹת סוּחָר. מִמֶּרְחָק תָּבִיא לַחֲמָה:

וְתָקַם בְּעוֹד לַיְלָה וְתָתֵן טֶרֶף לְבֵיתָהּ. וְחָק

לְנַעֲרָתֶיהָ:

זִמְמָה שָׂדֶה וְתִקְחָהּ. מִפָּרִי כַּפִּיהָ נָטְעָה כָּרֶם:

חָגְרָה בְּעוֹז מִתְנִיָּהּ. וְתֹאמַץ זְרוּעֶתֶיהָ:

טָעַמָּה כִּי טוֹב סִחָרָהּ. לֹא יִכְבֶּה בַּלֵּילָה נֵרָה:

יָדֶיהָ שִׁלְחָה בְּפִישׁוֹר. וְכַפִּיהָ תִּמְכּוּ פֶלֶךְ:

כַּפָּה פֶּרֶשָׁה לַעֲנִי. וְיָדֶיהָ שִׁלְחָה לְאַבְיוֹן:

לֹא תִירָא לְבֵיתָהּ מִשָּׁלֵג. כִּי כָּל בֵּיתָהּ לֶבֶשׁ שָׁנִים:

מִרְבָּדִים עֲשֻׂתָהּ לָהּ. שֵׁשׁ וְאַרְגָּמָן לְבוּשָׁהּ:

נוֹדַע בְּשַׁעְרִים בַּעֲלָהּ. בְּשִׁבְתּוֹ עִם זִקְנֵי אֶרֶץ:

סָדִין עֲשֻׂתָהּ וְתִמְכֹּר. וְחָגוֹר נָתַנָּה לְכַנָּעֲנִי:

עוֹז וְהִדָּר לְבוּשָׁהּ. וְתִשָּׁחַק לְיוֹם אַחֲרוֹן:

פִּיהָ פִּתְחָה בַּחֲכָמָה. וְתוֹרַת חֵסֶד עַל לְשׁוֹנָהּ:

צוּפִיָּה הִלִּיכּוֹת בֵּיתָהּ. וְלֶחֶם עֲצָלוֹת לֹא תֹאכַל:

קָמוּ בָנֶיהָ וַיֵּאשְׁרוּהָ. בַּעֲלָהּ וַיְהַלְלָהּ:

רְבוֹת בָּנוֹת עָשׂוּ חַיִּל. וְאֵת עֲלִית עַל כָּלָנָהּ:

שָׁקַר הַחֹן וְהַבֶּל הִיפִּי. אִשָּׁה יִרְאֵת ה' הִיא תִתְהַלֵּל:

תָּנוּ לָהּ מִפָּרִי יָדֶיהָ. וַיְהַלְלוּהָ בְּשַׁעְרִים מַעֲשִׂיהָ: