

# Eshet Hayil

(Proverbs 31:10)

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**Eshet Hayil Mi Yimtzah.** An interesting choice of words that translation does little to describe its true meaning. An Eshet Hayil is usually translated as a “woman of valor.” The traditional Aramaic translation and classical commentaries all interpret this to describe a woman who is descent and good. Yet, the term Hayil describes something much deeper and more active.



The term Hayil is related to the term Hayal, which is the Hebrew word for soldier. In a way then the Eshet Hayil is a woman soldier. This is why the term is usually translated as Valor as opposed to anything else. Yet, the word Valor while implying great deeds, still does not necessarily include the martial sense that the original Hebrew term includes. Thus, I interpret Eshet Hayil as the Woman Warrior.

The rest of this passage describes the activity of the Eshet Hayil as being active, ingenious, diligent and conquering. However, the Eshet Hayil is a woman warrior, fighting a woman’s fight, in a woman’s world. She does not fight a man’s battles, as would a man in a man’s world. Rather, true to proper military form, she stays in formation and serves as her rank and title defines her. Like the good soldier, she neither complains nor objects. Like a good soldier, the motto of the Eshet Hayil is “mine is not to question why, mine is but to do, and do it right, period. This is the true definition of the Eshet Hayil.

**Mi Yimtzah.** “Who can find.” Are these really words of praise? The subtle inference implied on the surface level of reading this is that most women are not Eshet Hayils and are thus somehow less. I do not believe that these words have come to make such a comparison. Indeed, I do not believe they refer back to the Eshet Hayil at all. I believe these words, when interpreted with a little help from Kabbalistic wisdom explain to us a statement about the proper mate that an Eshet Hayil naturally attracts to herself.

Who will find her? Only one who can be called “Mi.” This word in Hebrew is spelled with two letters Mem and Yod and Kabbalistically signifies a very specific state of mental balance and alacrity between the intellectual (Binah) and intuitive (Hokhma) faculties of the mind. This is a very high level of mental development and, needless to say, the physical accomplishments of the individual of such a broad mind will be many. Such a man will recognize the value of the



Eshet Hayil over the external values of beauty, sensuality, softness and submission so often today presented as desirable feminine qualities.

The Eshet Hayil by her natural martial nature towards life draws to herself a proper mate who can equally match her and support her endeavors all the while that she supports his. Together, the Eshet Hayil and her mentally intuitive and balanced husband form a team greater than the composite sum of their individual talents. She calls out for her natural mate, not with words, or with flamboyant advertisement of her sexuality, but rather with her sheer will of personality.

She is a powerhouse and a natural worker. She is a wife; mother and matriarch even while still a child. It is her nature and her destiny to be these things. She does not have to try to make them happen; she just naturally lets them happen. In this same way does a seasoned male martial artist approach military combat. Rather than think about what he has to do, he just allows himself to act as he was trained to, without forethought, doubt or confusion.

Both the Eshet Hayil and the Ish Hayil (martial artist, warrior) fight life's opponents each in their natural way. It is this psychic nature of the Eshet Hayil that catches the eye of her mate who is the true Ish Hayil. She needs not do anything more to attract him. For it is he who finds her, "Mi Yimtzah." "Mi" finds her, discovers her and considers this natural bond to be an acquisition of the highest value.

**V'rahok Mip'ninim Mikhrah.** "And distant from pearls is her price." Interesting how the Eshet Hayil warrior woman is compared to pearls instead of silver, gold or even diamonds, each of which can be argued to be of greater monetary value. Pearls however are very different in that their beauty is natural, whereas the beauty of these others must be cultivated. Gold, silver and diamonds are elements mined from the earth. Pearls on the other hands are grown inside a living creature. Gold and silver need to be refined, diamonds need to be cut, pearls need no such work. They are born with iridescence and luster.

Pearls represent natural beauty, and thus are rightly the image of comparison to the Eshet Hayil. She too is not a product of grooming, makeup and seduction; on the contrary, her beauty is natural, radiant and profound. Her character is what makes her most attractive, regardless of the size of her waist or breasts. The size of her heart outweighs the importance of the size or shape of any other part of her body.

An Eshet Hayil does not identify herself with her appearance; rather she identifies her self worth by what she does, not by how she looks. She is not impressed by whimsical fashions, peer pressures, or popular cultural concepts of femininity or beauty. Her appearance is always graceful and majestic, never slutty or whorish. She is greater than a pearl. Her beauty, like that of the pearl, is natural; not augmented like silver, gold or even diamonds. Pearls have great worth; the value of an Eshet Hayil can never be estimated.