



Eishet Chayil

By Pam Morris, Early Learning Center director

“A woman of valor, who can find? Her value far exceeds that of gems.” So begins Chapter 31 of Proverbs, the Eishet Chayil. Each Friday evening, at the Shabbat table, husbands and children praise the woman of the home. The proverb details her strengths, both physical and intellectual; her mitzvot and her calm and caring demeanor are lauded as well.

There are conflicting accounts as to who the original woman of valor was. “...some say the ‘woman of Valor’ refers to a generic praiseworthy woman, according to one Midrash, Eishet Chayil was originally composed by Avraham in memory of Sarah... Others say that King Solomon wrote it about Queen Batsheva, his mom.” (Chabad.org)

While I am blessed to have my family honor me with the Eishet Chayil each Shabbat, it is daunting praise. This woman that is exalted in the prayer, whether modeled after someone who actually lived or an idyllic manifestation, is a hard act to follow. On my absolute best days, I believe I only reach about 20% of these attributes and that is when I am trying!

But maybe, this is how women are viewed in the family? Are the things that we do so magical to them? The juggling of schedules, making everyone feel loved, wanted and special, that almost seems too scary to contemplate. While the praise sounds great (don’t we all want to be viewed as superheroes in our family’s eyes) are we setting the bar too high for our daughters and sons to live up to?

I say no. I think it is important to be that role model for our children. We need to show them all they can achieve when they have the support of their family; their love from HaShem. Because the Eishet Chayil doesn’t flourish in a vacuum. She is working alongside her community helping those in need. She is in the business world achieving great things. She is caring for her family with love and joy. She is showing that both



choices are important and worthy. She shows that both can be done together with grace and compassion.

And through it all she shows that we have HaShem in our corner.

“A G-d-fearing woman is one to be praised.” I strive to be an Eishet Chayil: for my daughters, for my husband, for my family, for my community, for Eretz Yisrael.

Shabbat Shalom.