

Proverbs 31:10-31 presents a masterful acrostic poem, where each verse begins with successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet (א to ת). This literary structure isn't merely decorative—it's theological. It presents a complete (A to Z) portrait of ideal Israel living in covenant faithfulness.

This poem isn't primarily about marriage or domesticity. Rather, it uses the metaphor of the "woman of valor" to depict Israel herself—the nation in her full Torah-shaped glory. Each verse reveals another facet of what Israel becomes when she embraces wisdom and walks in covenant.

The acrostic structure suggests completeness—this is a full-orbed vision of national faithfulness. When Israel lives according to Torah, she becomes this figure: strong, wise, productive, compassionate, and internationally renowned. She is the living embodiment of Lady Wisdom from Proverbs 1-9.

This isn't a prescription for women's roles—it's a prescription for national identity. The poem shows what happens when a people fully embrace divine wisdom: they become a light to the nations, productive in commerce, ethical in conduct, and blessed by God.

א ALEPH – PROVERBS 31:10

Hebrew

אִשֶׁת־חַיִל מִי יִמְצָא

וְרָחֶק מִפְּנִינִים מְכָרָהּ

Literal Translation

A woman of valor—who can find?

Her worth is far above rubies.

Insight

- The first word *Eshet* begins with **Aleph (א)**, starting the acrostic.
- *Chayil* (valor) is used for warriors and noblemen—this is **not domestic meekness**, but covenantal strength.
- *Mi yimtza?* = “Who can find?” implies rarity, not impossibility.
- This verse parallels **Proverbs 3:15**, where *wisdom* is said to be more precious than rubies.
- This is **Lady Wisdom in action**—and **Ideal Israel** when walking in covenant faithfulness.
- She is not a wife to be married—she is a **nation to be formed**.

ב BETH – PROVERBS 31:11

Hebrew

בָּטַח בָּהּ לֵב בְּעֵלָהּ

וְשָׁלַל לֹא יִחָסֵר

Literal Translation

The heart of her husband safely trusts in her,

And he shall have no lack of gain.

Insight

- The first word *Batach* (“he trusts”) begins with **Beth (ב)**—the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet.
- This “husband” (*ba'lah*) isn't named—but in Biblical theology, **Yahweh is Israel's husband** (Isaiah 54:5).

- *Lev ba'lah* (the heart of her husband) shows **relational covenant trust**, not emotional romance.
- *Shalal* (spoil, gain) evokes the **language of conquest** and blessing—Israel brings reward when faithful.
- This isn't marriage advice—it's **a vision of national reliability**. The faithful woman (Israel) brings honor and abundance to her Husband (the Lord).

ג GIMEL – PROVERBS 31:12

Hebrew

גַּמְלָתָהּ טוֹב וְלֹא רָע

כָּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיהָ

Literal Translation

She does him good and not evil

All the days of her life.

Insight

- The first word *Gemalathu* (“she deals with him” or “she repays him”) begins with **Gimel (ג)**—the third Hebrew letter.
- *Tov v'lo ra*—good and not evil—recalls the Edenic tension of Genesis 2–3, but here **Israel chooses good**.
- The phrase *kol yemei chayyeha* (“all the days of her life”) implies **lifelong covenant loyalty**, not momentary virtue.
- This isn't a domestic pattern of “supporting her man.” This is **national consistency**—Israel as the faithful covenant partner, choosing good every day.

ד DALETH – PROVERBS 31:13

Hebrew

דָּרְשָׁה צֶמֶר וּפְשָׁתִים

וַתַּעֲשֶׂה בְחֶפְזָהּ כְּפִיָּהּ

Literal Translation

She seeks wool and flax,

And works willingly with her hands.

Insight

- The first word *Darshah* (“she seeks”) begins with **Daleth (ד)**—the fourth Hebrew letter.
- *Wool and flax* are symbols of **production and provision**—she gathers raw materials to **build** something.
- This is not a hobbyist at a spinning wheel—this is **resource management** at the national scale.
- *Works willingly with her hands* (literally, “with delight her hands work”) suggests **Torah obedience** in action (cf. Deut. 6:8).
- This is **Israel as a working nation**, not idle in blessing, but stewarding what God has given.

ה HE – PROVERBS 31:14

Hebrew

הַיְתָה כְּאֹנְיֹת סוּחָר

מִמְרָחֵק תָּבִיא לַחֲמָה

Literal Translation

She is like the merchant ships;

She brings her food from afar.

Insight

- The first word *Hayetah* (“she is”) begins with **He (ה)**—the fifth Hebrew letter.
- The simile *ka’oniyot socher* likens her to **merchant ships**—active in **international trade**.
- She brings in food *from afar*—this isn’t about groceries, it’s about **diplomatic, economic engagement**.
- Israel, in covenant faithfulness, is not isolationist. She interacts with the nations **wisely and beneficially**.
- This is Proverbs’ vision of **Torah-informed global presence**—the ideal nation sustains itself while enriching others.

י VAV – PROVERBS 31:15

Hebrew

וַתִּקְם בְּעוֹד לַיְלָה

וַתִּתֵּן טָרֶף לְבֵיתָהּ

וַחֶק לְנַעֲרֹתֶיהָ

Literal Translation

She rises while it is yet night,

And gives food to her household,

And a portion to her maidens.

Insight

- The first word *Vatakom* (“she rises”) begins with Vav (ו)—the sixth Hebrew letter.
- Rising before dawn signals eagerness and readiness—a motif seen in the Exodus and among prophets.
- *Teref* (“prey” or “food”) is used—likely metaphorical for daily provision, but with a strong, even predatory, connotation. This is no passive figure.
- She provides not just for herself, but for her entire house—symbolic of Israel’s care for her people under righteous leadership.
- The maidens may represent the dependent classes—this woman rules her house like a wise, just matriarch. Think Deuteronomic justice applied domestically.

ז ZAYIN – PROVERBS 31:16

Hebrew

זָמְמָה שְׂדֵה וַתִּקְחָהּ

מִפְרֵי בְּפִיָּהּ נִטְעָה כֶּרֶם

Literal Translation

She considers a field and takes it;

With the fruit of her hands, she plants a vineyard.

Insight

- The first word *Zamemah* (“she considers” or “plans”) begins with **Zayin (ז)**—the seventh Hebrew letter.
- This is **land language**—*sadeh* (field) and *kerem* (vineyard) are common symbols of **covenant blessing** (see Isaiah 5, Deuteronomy 28).
- She doesn’t merely receive land—she **evaluates it and acquires it**, then uses her own labor to produce fruit.
- *Vineyard* signals not just productivity, but **long-term investment**—a vision of Israel rooted in the land and **thriving under Torah**.
- This is **Joshua meets Proverbs**—Israel, wisely stewarding her inheritance.

VERSES 17–23 (CHETH–NUN): THE TESTIMONY – “THIS IS HOW YOU KNOW SHE’S THE REAL THING”

n CHETH – PROVERBS 31:17

Hebrew

חָגְרָה בְּעֹז מְתִנְיָהּ

וַתְּאַמֵּץ זְרוֹעֶתֶיהָ

Literal Translation

She girds her loins with strength,

And strengthens her arms.

Insight

- The first word *Chagrah* (“she girds”) begins with **Cheth (ח)**—the eighth Hebrew letter.
- “Girding the loins” is **battle prep language** (cf. Exodus 12:11, Job 38:3). This woman is no spectator—she’s ready for action.
- *Oz* (strength) and *zero’ot* (arms) frame her as **capable and courageous**, not timid or reserved.
- This is **Israel at full capacity**, responding to the covenant not with lip service, but **with resolve and readiness**.
- The verse draws a direct line between **Torah obedience and personal empowerment**—the strong nation is the faithful one.

ט TETH – PROVERBS 31:18

Hebrew

קָטְעָמָה כִּי טוֹב סִחְרָהּ

לֹא יִכְבֶּה בְּלִילָהּ נְרָה

Literal Translation

She perceives that her merchandise is good;

Her lamp does not go out at night.

Insight

- The first word *Ta'amah* (“she tastes” or “perceives”) begins with **Teth (ט)**—the ninth Hebrew letter.
- She “tastes” that her *sachrah* (merchandise/trade) is good—this is **discernment**, a wise evaluation of **outcome and fruit**.
- Her *LAMP* burning through the night echoes the **temple menorah** (Exodus 27:20–21) and the unceasing flame of God’s presence.
- This verse ties together **economic wisdom** and **spiritual vigilance**.
- Ideal Israel is **productive and perceptive, prospering under God** and shining continuously in the darkness.

י YOD – PROVERBS 31:19

Hebrew

יָדֶיהָ שְׁלַחָהּ בַּכִּישׁוֹר

וְכַפָּיָהּ תִּמְכּוּ פָלֶךְ

Literal Translation

She puts her hands to the distaff,

And her palms hold the spindle.

Insight

- The first word *Yadeha* (“her hands”) begins with **Yod (י)**—the tenth Hebrew letter.
- This verse returns to imagery of **skilled, intentional labor**—not servile drudgery, but precise and purposeful work.
- Her labor isn’t random—it’s ordered, beautiful, and productive.
- **Ideal Israel doesn’t outsource wisdom**—she *crafts* it herself with Torah-shaped hands.

כ KAPH – PROVERBS 31:20

Hebrew

כַּפָּהּ פָּרְשָׁה לְעֵנִי

וְיָדֶיהָ שְׁלַחָהּ לְאֲבִיּוֹן

Literal Translation

She stretches out her palm to the poor,

And extends her hands to the needy.

Insight

- The first word *Kappah* (“her palm”) begins with **Kaph (כ)**—the eleventh Hebrew letter.
- This verse showcases **active charity**, not just generosity but **PURSUING** justice (*SHALACH* = “sends out”).

- The parallel between *ani* (poor) and *evyon* (needy) echoes the Torah’s repeated call to care for **the vulnerable**—widow, orphan, stranger (cf. Deut. 15:7–11).
- Her hands—just described as working the spindle—now also **serve the suffering**.
- Ideal Israel is **Torah-shaped in economy and ethics**: productive hands **don’t hoard**, they **bless**.

מ MEM – PROVERBS 31:22

Hebrew

מַרְבְּדִים עֲשֵׂתָהּ לָהּ

שֵׁשׁ וְאַרְגָּמָן לְבוּשָׁהּ

Literal Translation

She makes coverings for herself;

Fine linen and purple are her clothing.

Insight

- The first word *Marbadim* (“coverings” or “bedspreads”) begins with **Mem (מ)**—the thirteenth Hebrew letter.
- *Shesh* (fine linen) and *argaman* (purple) are **royal and priestly materials** (cf. Exodus 26:1; Esther 8:15).
- This isn’t fashion—it’s **identity**. Her clothing speaks to her status as **honorable and consecrated**.
- The imagery aligns with Israel as the **bride adorned for her husband** (Isaiah 61:10).
- **Ideal Israel is clothed in righteousness and royal calling**, wrapped in dignity because of her obedience.

נ NUN – PROVERBS 31:23

Hebrew

נֹדָע בַּשְּׁעָרִים בְּעִלְיָהּ

בְּשִׁבְתוֹ עִם זְקֵנֵי-אֶרֶץ

Literal Translation

Her husband is known in the gates,

When he sits among the elders of the land.

Insight

- The first word *Noda’* (“is known”) begins with **Nun (נ)**—the fourteenth Hebrew letter.
- The *gates* were the place of **public judgment, civic leadership, and honor**.
- The husband’s renown flows from her faithful stewardship—**her actions elevate his reputation**.
- If she is **Ideal Israel**, then he is **the Lord Himself**, magnified when His people walk in covenant (cf. Ezekiel 36:23).
- This verse signals a **reversal of national shame**: when Israel is faithful, **her God is publicly glorified**.

ס SAMEKH – PROVERBS 31:24

Hebrew

סָדִין עֲשֵׂתָהּ וְתִמְכֹר

וְחִגֹּר נִתְּנָהּ לְכַנְעָנִי

Literal Translation

She makes linen garments and sells them,

And delivers girdles to the merchant.

Insight

- The first word *Sadin* (“linen garment”) begins with **Samekh (ס)**—the fifteenth Hebrew letter.
- She’s not just a producer—she’s an **entrepreneur**: weaving, selling, managing international trade.
- *Lakk’na’ani* (“to the Canaanite”) is a Hebrew idiom for **merchant**—highlighting her engagement in **foreign commerce**.
- **Ideal Israel blesses the nations not by mimicry, but by faithful, wise industry.**

ע AYIN – PROVERBS 31:25

Hebrew

עֹז וְהַדָּר לְבוּשָׁהּ

וְתִשְׂחַק לְיוֹם אַחֲרָיוֹן

Literal Translation

Strength and honor are her clothing,

And she laughs at the days to come.

Insight

- The first word *Oz* (“strength”) begins with **Ayin (ע)**—the sixteenth Hebrew letter.
- *Levushah* (her clothing) ties back to v. 22—her outer garments reflect **inner character**: not silks, but strength (*oz*) and majesty (*hadar*).
- She *laughs at the future*—not from folly, but **confidence** in her preparation and righteousness.
- This is **the fearless posture of a Torah-walking nation**—not anxious about tomorrow because she’s grounded in covenant truth.
- **Ideal Israel has no dread of exile or scarcity when walking in wisdom.** Her strength is not military—it’s moral.

פ PE – PROVERBS 31:26

Hebrew

פִּיהָ פְּתֹחָהּ בְּחָכְמָה

וְתוֹרַת חָסֵד עַל לְשׁוֹנֶיהָ

Literal Translation

She opens her mouth with wisdom,

And the law of kindness is on her tongue.

Insight

- The first word *Piha* (“her mouth”) begins with **Pe (פ)**—the seventeenth Hebrew letter.
- Her speech is not casual—it is filled with *chokhmah* (wisdom) and *torat chesed* (law of covenant kindness).
- This verse joins **wisdom and Torah**—not as abstract study, but **as speech that shapes and blesses**.
- She is **Lady Wisdom** in Proverbs 8, now **embodied and vocal**.
- **Ideal Israel is not just righteous in deed but instructive in word**—a teacher of nations (cf. Isaiah 2:3).

צ TSADE – PROVERBS 31:27

Hebrew

צוֹפְיָהּ הַלִּיכוֹת בַּיְתָהּ

וְלֶחֶם עֲצָלוּת לֹא תֹאכֵל

Literal Translation

She watches over the ways of her household,

And does not eat the bread of idleness.

Insight

- The first word *Tzofiyah* (“she watches carefully”) begins with **Tsade (צ)**—the eighteenth Hebrew letter.
- The verb is one of **vigilant oversight**, often used in prophetic and military contexts—she is no passive bystander.
- She guards the *halichot* (“goings,” paths, or conduct) of her house—a picture of **moral governance**.
- She rejects *lechem atzlut* (“bread of idleness”)—no tolerance for spiritual or societal laziness.
- **Ideal Israel is alert, discerning, and diligent**—governed by Torah, not inertia.

ק QOPH – PROVERBS 31:28

Hebrew

קָמוּ בָנֶיהָ וַיִּשְׁרוּהָ

בְּעֵלָהּ וַיְהַלְלֶהָ

Literal Translation

Her children rise up and call her blessed;

Her husband also, and he praises her.

Insight

- The first word *Qamu* (“they rise up”) begins with **Qoph (ק)**—the nineteenth Hebrew letter.
- The *baneyha* (her children) likely represent **future generations**, or even the **citizens of the nation**.
- They rise and call her *ashrehu* (“blessed”)—a covenantal word of **public honor**.
- Her husband—again, symbolically **the Lord**—responds with praise, as He often does when Israel walks faithfully (cf. Zephaniah 3:17).

- This verse reflects **multi-generational covenant blessing**: when Israel lives wisely, her people and her God rejoice.

ר RESH – PROVERBS 31:29

Hebrew

רבות בנות עשו חיל

ואת עלית על כלן

Literal Translation

Many daughters have done virtuously,

But you surpass them all.

Insight

- The first word *Rabot* (“many”) begins with **Resh (ר)**—the twentieth Hebrew letter.
- *Banot* (daughters) can be read as other **nations** or **peoples**—many have achieved strength (**CHAYIL**), but none match this woman.
- *At alit* (“you have risen above them”) echoes language of **exaltation and distinction**.
- This verse is a declaration: **Ideal Israel stands apart**, not by birthright, but by faithfulness.
- She is not one among many—she is **God’s unique, covenantal nation**, set apart for His praise.

ש SHIN – PROVERBS 31:30

Hebrew

שקר החן והבל היפי

אשה יראת יהוה היא תתהלל

Literal Translation

Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain,

But a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised.

Insight

- The first word *Sheker* (“falsehood” or “deceit”) begins with **Shin (ש)**—the twenty-first Hebrew letter.
- *Chen* (charm) and *yofi* (beauty) are exposed as unreliable—they’re the **strange woman’s currency** in Proverbs 5–7.
- In contrast, this woman is defined by *yirat YHWH*—**the fear of the Lord**, the cornerstone of biblical wisdom (Proverbs 1:7).
- Her praise (*tithallal*) doesn’t come from flattery or appearance—it is **earned by covenant faithfulness**.
- This is **Lady Wisdom’s final rebuttal** to the strange woman: the true beauty is **spiritual allegiance**, not seduction.

ת TAV – PROVERBS 31:31

Hebrew

תָּנוּ לָהּ מִפְּרֵי יָדֶיהָ

וְיִהְיֶה לָּהּ בְּשַׁעֲרֵיהֶם מַעֲשֵׂיהָ

Literal Translation

Give her the fruit of her hands,

And let her own works praise her in the gates.

Insight

- The first word *T'nu* (“give”) begins with **Tav (ת)**—the twenty-second and final Hebrew letter.
- This is the only **imperative** in the entire poem: *Give her what she has earned*.
- Her *ma'aseyah* (“works”) praise her—not just words or intentions, but **visible fruit of covenant living**.
- *In the gates*—public acknowledgment, civic honor. She belongs not in a private garden, but **on public display**, as Israel was meant to be (Deut. 4:6–8).
- This verse seals the identity: **she is Ideal Israel**, vindicated before the nations, glorified by God, and honored by her children.