

**Life Tip #5 – Take Some Zinc**  
**Haftarah Chayeh Sarah**  
**Kings I 1:1-31**

Giacomo Casanova, whose life spanned from 1725 to 1789, is known to be one of the greatest seducers of all time with a seemingly unquenchable libido. He is also rumored to have eaten fifty raw oysters for breakfast each day. Perhaps you see where I am going with this. Oysters are loaded with the mineral zinc. They have far more zinc than any other food, coming in at about seventy-five milligrams per serving. For my Jewish listeners, the Torah forbids you from eating zinc, but luckily zinc can still be found in a plethora of other foods—in pumpkin seeds, cashews, and chickpeas. Unfortunately, none of these have anywhere close to the amount found in oysters. But zinc is also available as a supplement. The best kind of zinc is probably zinc picolinate, although zinc acetate is particularly helpful if you are coming down with a cold. Don't buy the cheap stuff; this would be like buying soybean oil instead of olive oil. And make sure you always take zinc on a full stomach, otherwise you'll get a bad stomach ache. And no, I'm not a doctor—I still don't even have my PhD yet.

Now that I have your attention, let me tell you about the haftarah reading for this week. This week, we read from the very first chapter of the Book of Kings. The saga begins as follows. King David is now very old. He is a very old man. He lies in his castle in Jerusalem in the year 970 BCE. And he complains that he is cold. Nothing can warm him up, it seems. The Torah reads that they covered him in clothes, and yet he still could not get warm. What do they decide to do? David's attendants look through all the borders of Israel for a beautiful young woman. They find the young woman Avishag and bring her to the king. Having Avishag by his side warms the king up. But the Torah notes that King David does not "know" her, hint hint—in other words, he doesn't have sex with her. But we can presume that he is cuddling with her, looking at her, trying to please her, thanking her for that hot bowl of chicken soup she made him. King David is "warm" again.

Meanwhile, in the countryside, a man named Adoniya is stirring up trouble in the countryside. He is David's fourth son from his wife Haggith. Adoniya wants to take the throne for himself after his father dies. And so, Adoniya starts up a rebellion, gathering troops to march on the capital. This is a problem because Adoniya is not next in line to the throne—rather, David's second son, Solomon, is. At this point, the Torah mentions once again how old David is. At court, the fear is that David will be too old to stand up to Adoniya, that he won't have the energy or even the awareness to know what is happening.

David's wife, Bathsheba, is also the mother of Solomon, the rightful heir to the throne. She comes before David and tells him about Adoniya's rebellion. And she tells him that he swore to her that Solomon, not Adoniya, would be next in line to the kingdom. Meanwhile, Avishag is in the room with David waiting on him.

In this moment, David seems to come alive. He becomes once again the David of earlier times, the young warrior who defeated Goliath with a slingshot and who had united the northern and southern kingdoms of his vast country. He is the King David we remember. He stands before Bathsheba and says: "Surely, Solomon, your son, shall reign after me and shall sit on my throne in my place. Surely will I do so this day." Bathsheba then bows her face to the ground, prostrates herself before the king, and says, "Let my Lord King David live forever."

David then promptly quashes the rebellion, and, as we all know, Solomon becomes the next king.

In this story, Avishag is both literally and figuratively the *elephant in the room*. Why is she so emphasized? Why does she need to be there?

The Torah tells us that it is because King David was cold; even the warmest blanket could not warm him up. But are we really to believe that nothing could make David warm other than a beautiful young woman named Avishag?

The warmth which Avishag gives David should, it seems, be taken symbolically. What Avishag did for King David was to reawaken his sexual desire. She got the blood pumping through his veins again. This is what, we might say, “warmed him up.” When his wife Bathsheva entered the scene and Avishag was in the background, this further enlivened David. An element of erotic drama had been re-introduced into his life after many years, if not decades, of routine.

But the Torah also notes that David never slept with Avishag, he never “knew” her. Put another way, David did not act upon his sexual desire for Avishag. Instead, he metamorphosed it to a greater, loftier purpose. He used his newly won testosterone not to actually have sex but to instead protect his kingdom from Adoniyah and to ensure that his line would pass through Solomon.

In this chapter, the Torah teaches us the importance of cultivating sexual energy within ourselves. But the purpose of this energy is, to some extent, wasted if we use it to just satisfy sexual desire. Instead, this energy should be redirected, transmuted into creative enterprises.

Napoleon Hill, author of the legendary book *Think and Grow Rich*, emphasized this point in this work. He said that people who become wealthy, people who become famous, people who become great artists, do so by transmuting sexual energy into creative energy. He even went so far as to say: “Sex energy is the creative energy of all genius. There has never been, and never will be a great leader, builder, or artist lacking in this driving force of sex.”

It actually took philosophy a long time to figure out how our sex drive extends far beyond the actual desire for intercourse. Throughout the Middle Ages and beyond, the sex drive was seen as just a tiny compartment of our psyche which should, of course, be rooted out. It really was not until Sigmund Freud that humans began to catch on to the fact that sex was a powerful force influencing all kinds of areas of our psychology. Freud, writing in Vienna at the turn of the twentieth century, was heavily influenced by Darwin. Darwin showed how all species have evolved, to some extent, based on sexual selection. We all have certain preferences, traits, personality types based on our need to reproduce.

You don’t have to read too much Freud to realize that he went too far. Freud saw sex in just about everything, even contending that infant boys could be jealous of the size of one another’s penis and that this would have drastic repercussions on the types of adults they became later in life. This was the theory of penis envy. But Freud’s great achievement was to show that sexual desire is natural, healthy, and necessary. Before Freud, sexual desire was seen as something shameful which represented a deviation or an aberration from who you really were as a person. Freud’s contribution was to show that, in some sense, we *are* our sexual desires, and we ignore them or suppress them at our peril. In his landmark work, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud theorized that within all humans are two drives, a drive toward sex, procreation, flourishing, and a drive toward death, decay, and self-abnegation. For Freud, the drive toward sex or *Eros* and the drive toward Life were, more or less, the same thing.

In this opening story to the Book of Kings, we see how the Torah had reached Freud’s insight and Napoleon Hill’s advice thousands of years earlier. In the story of King David, we see how, without erotic energy, he is cold, he is lifeless, he is practically dead. But the rekindling of

this sexual energy allows him to become the king he once was. Crucially, though, he transmutes this energy into loftier purpose. He uses it to make himself *erect*—not his penis.

There are many ways to naturally increase your testosterone. One quality many of these strategies share is that they get the blood pumping through your body. Lifting very heavy weights, for example, increases testosterone. Sprinting increases testosterone. Getting enough sleep and relaxing increases testosterone. And you can even increase this hormone by engaging in activities which get you fired up, such as watching an intense football game or playing a competitive board game. But perhaps the most viable solution does not require you to search your entire country for your equivalent of Avishag. This solution can be found at your local pharmacy, and it is called Zinc. Zinc is a critical mineral for allowing testosterone to more freely circulate in your bloodstream. Take it when you want to rediscover your inner King David.