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# The Myth of Lilith



# Amanda Buys' Spiritual Covering

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<sup>1</sup> Meaning: The ANOINTED one

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# The Myth of Lilith

According to Jewish folklore, Lilith was the first wife of Adam. She was banished from the Garden of Eden when she refused to make herself subservient to Adam (specifically, she refused to get into the missionary position with him during sex).

When she was cast out, she was made into a demon figure, and Adam was given a second wife, Eve, who was fashioned from his rib to ensure her obedience to her man.

The following is an excerpt from a Jewish folktale that describes some of the evils attributed to Lilith:

*"The wife brought the mirror and all of the fine furnishings in the cellar to her own home and proudly displayed it. She hung the mirror in the room of their daughter, who was a dark-haired coquette. The girl glanced at herself in the mirror all the time, and in this way she was drawn into Lilith's web.... For that mirror had hung in the den of demons, and a daughter of Lilith had made her home there. And when the mirror was taken from the haunted house, the demoness came with it. For every mirror is a gateway to the Other World and leads directly to Lilith's cave. That is the cave Lilith went to when she abandoned Adam and the Garden of Eden for all time, the cave where she sported with her demon lovers. From these unions multitudes of demons were born, who flocked from that cave and infiltrated the world. And when they want to return, they simply enter the nearest mirror. That is why it is said that Lilith makes her home in every mirror..."*

*"Now the daughter of Lilith who made her home in that mirror watched every movement of the girl who posed before it. She bided her time and one day she slipped out of the mirror and took possession of the girl, entering through her eyes. In this way she took control of her, stirring her desire at will..."*

*So it happened that this young girl, driven by the evil wishes of Lilith's daughter, ran around with young men who lived in the same neighborhood."*

From "Lilith's Cave," Lilith's Cave: Jewish tales of the supernatural, edited by Howard Schwartz (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988)

Other folktales describe of how Lilith captured Jewish babies in the night and ate them, and how she led young girls and young husbands astray.

Although Lilith was demonized by early Jewish culture as a symbol of promiscuity and disobedience, many modern Jewish feminists see Lilith as a positive figure, a model of woman as equal to man in the creation story.

For further reference, please check out the pages I have listed below, or read the introduction to the collection of stories in Lilith's Cave (see above).

## The Mystery of Lilith

Vampires have been around since the beginning of time. Back in the Garden of Eden, before Eve, there was Lilith. Lilith is believed to be the first vampire.

## Lilith

The **Queen of the Night**, portrayed in Hebrew legend as the first woman, created to be the wife of Adam, but with such an evil spirit that she departed Adam's side to dwell with the forces of darkness. Also known as Lili, she probably originated as **Lilitu**, one of the **seven Babylonian evil spirits** incorporated into Hebrew lore.

Variations on her story relate that she was Eve, having sinned and been ejected from Eden and fleeing into the air to prey on children. Another version portrays her as the **queen of succubi**, leader of the night demons who prey on men, drawing out their seed and often their blood in the hope of causing misery and death. Lilith has a **special hatred for children**, as her own were twisted, misshapen, and wicked. In corporeal form, she appears as a beautiful woman with an abundance of sharp black hair on her legs. Characters similar to Lilith are found in tales all over the world. (See also Succubus.)

## Lilitu

A Babylonian demon, often considered an evil spirit of the night. Lilitu probably had an influence in the formation of the Hebrew legend of Lilith.

## Succubus

A female demon, the feminine to the male incubus, a night fiend that visits men in their sleep to torment their dreams and to engage in sexual relations. The succubus, like the incubus, has definite vampiric characteristics, including its nighttime activities that render a victim totally exhausted and weakened by incessant carnal performances. The demon is also quite similar to such female vampire spirits as the mara and the Gypsy mullo, the latter said to carry on romances with young men without their knowledge, the only evidence of their nocturnal orgies being acute, potentially fatal fatigue. The *Malleus Maleficarum* and the writer Walter Map both made mention of the succubus; Map wrote of the demon Meridiana.

## Lilith Today

In recent history Lilith was still used to portray a somewhat negative persona. The character Lilith on the sitcom *Cheers* was portrayed as a cold, unloving woman who sucked the life out of poor Fraser. Today, however, Lilith has been used as a feminist symbol of strength for many women. In fact, there is a new concert series called *The Lilith Fair*, which will feature female artists of today. See *Ask Lilith* for another interesting approach to the myth of Lilith.

## From "Hebrew Myths" by Robert Graves and Raphael Patai:

1. Some say the God created man and woman in His own image on the Sixth Day, giving them charge over the world, but that Eve did not yet exist. Now, God had set Adam to name every beast, bird and other living thing.

When they passed before him in pairs, male and female, Adam ... being already like a twenty-year-old man, felt jealous of their loves, and though he tried coupling with each

female creature in turn, found no satisfaction in the act. He therefore cried: "*Every creature but I has a proper mate!*" and prayed God would remedy this injustice.

2. God then formed Lilith, the first woman, just as He had formed Adam, except that he used filth and sediment instead of pure dust. From Adam's union with this demoness, and with another like her named Naamah, Tubal Cain's sister, sprang Asmodeus and innumerable demons that still plague mankind. Many generations later, Lilith and Naamah came to Solomon's judgement seat, disguised as harlots of Jerusalem.
3. Adam and Lilith never found peace together, for when he wished to lie with her, she took offence at the recumbent position he demanded. "Why must I lie beneath you?" she asked. "I also was made from dust, and am therefore your equal." Because Adam tried to compel her obedience by force, Lilith, in a rage, uttered the magic name of God, rose into the air and left him.
4. Adam complained to God: "I have been deserted by my helpmeet." God at once sent the angels Senoy, Sansenoy and Semangelof to fetch Lilith back. They found her beside the Red Sea, a region abounding in lascivious demons, to whom she bore 'lilim' at the rate of more than one hundred a day. "Return to Adam without delay," the angels said, "or we will drown you!" Lilith asked: "How can I return to Adam and live like an honest housewife, after my stay beside the Red Sea?" "It will be death to refuse!" they answered. "How can I die," Lilith asked again, "when God has ordered me to take charge of all newborn children: **boys up to the eighth day of life, that of circumcision; girls up to the twentieth day**. None the less, if ever I see your three names or likenesses displayed in an amulet above a newborn child, I promise to spare it." To this they agreed; but God punished Lilith by making one hundred of her demon children perish daily; and if she could not destroy a human infant, because of the angelic amulet, she would spitefully turn against her own.
5. Some say that Lilith ruled as queen in Zmargad, and again in Sheba; and was the demoness who destroyed Job's sons.
6. Yet she escaped the curse of death which overtook Adam, since they had parted long before the Fall. Lilith and Naamah not only strangle infants but also seduce dreaming men, and one of whom, sleeping alone, may become their victim.

## Notes:

1. Divergences between the Creation myths of Genesis I and II, which allow Lilith to be presumed as Adam's first mate, result from a careless weaving together of an early Judean and a late priestly tradition. The older version contains the rib incident. Lilith typifies the Anath-worshipping Canaanite women, who were permitted pre-nuptial promiscuity. Time after time the prophets denounced Israelite women for following Canaanite practices; at first, apparently, with the priests' approval -- since their habit of dedicating to God the fees thus earned is expressly forbidden in **Deuteronomy 23:18**.

Lilith's flight to the Red Sea recalls the ancient Hebrew view that water attracts demons. "Tortured and rebellious demons" also found safe harbourage in Egypt. Thus Asmodeus, who had strangled Sarah's first six husbands, fled "to the uttermost parts of Egypt" (Tobit VIII:3), when Tobias burned the heart and liver of a fish on their wedding night.

2. Lilith's bargain with the angels has its ritual counterpart in an apotropaic {1} rite once performed in many Jewish communities. To protect the newborn child against Lilith -- and especially a male, until he could be permanently safeguarded by circumcision-- a ring was drawn with natron, or charcoal, on the wall of the birthroom, and inside it were written the words: "Adam and Eve. Out, Lilith!"

Also the names Senoy, Sansenoy and Semangelof (meanings uncertain) were inscribed on the door. If Lilith nevertheless succeeded in approaching the child and fondling him, he would laugh in his sleep. To avert danger, it was held wise to strike the sleeping child's lips with one finger -- whereupon Lilith would vanish.

3. 'Lilith' is usually derived from the Babylonian-Assyrian word 'lilitu,' 'a female demon, or wind-spirit' -- one of a triad mentioned in Babylonian spells. But she appears earlier as 'Lillake' on a 2000 BC Sumerian tablet from Ur containing the tale of \_Gilgamesh and the Willow Tree\_. There she is a demoness dwelling in the trunk of a willow tree tended by the Goddess Inanna (Anath) on the banks of the Euphrates.

Popular Hebrew etymology seems to have derived 'Lilith' from 'layil,' 'night'; and she therefore often appears as a hairy night-monster, as she also does in Arabian folklore. Solomon suspected the Queen of Sheba of being Lilith, because she had hairy legs. His judgement on the two harlots is recorded in 1 Kings III:16.

According to Isaiah XXXIV:14-15, Lilith dwells among the desolate ruins in the Edomite Desert where satyrs ("se'ir"), reems {2}, pelicans, owls {3}, jackals, ostriches, arrow-snakes and kites {4} keep her company.

4. Lilith's children are called 'lilim.' In the \_Targum Yerushalmi, the priestly blessing of Numbers VI:26 becomes: "The Lord bless thee in all thy doings, and preserve thee from the Lilim!" The fourth-century AD commentator Hieronymus identified Lilith with the Greek Lamia, a Libyan queen deserted by Zeus, whom his wife Hera robbed of her children. She took revenge by robbing other women of theirs.
5. The Lamiae, who seduced sleeping men, sucked their blood and ate their flesh, as Lilith and her fellow-demonesses did, were also known as 'Empusae,' 'forcers-in'; or 'Mormolyceia,' 'frightening wolves'; and described as 'Children of Hecate.' A

Hellenistic relief shows a naked Lamia straddling a traveller asleep on his back. It is characteristic of civilizations where women are treated as chattels that they must adopt the recumbent posture during intercourse, which Lilith refused. That Greek witches who worshipped Hecate favoured the superior posture, we know from Apuleius; and it occurs in early Sumerian representations of the sexual act, though not in the Hittite.

Malinowski writes that Melanesian girls ridicule what they call 'the missionary position,'{5} which demands that they should lie passive and recumbent.

6. 'Naamah,' 'pleasant,' is explained as meaning that 'the demoness sang pleasant songs to idols.' 'Zmargad' suggests 'smaragdos,' the semi-precious aquamarine; and may therefore be her submarine dwelling. A demon named Smaragos occurs in the Homeric Epigrams, pps 65 - 69.

- i) Apotropaic. "Intended to ward off evil."
- ii) Reems. Thanks to Diccon Frankborn (dickney@access.digex.net) for the following: The reem -- properly, re'em, pronounced roughly "ray-em" was the aurochs, the largest and most dangerous wild ox that ever lived.
- iii) The owl is particularly sacred --if that's the right word-- to Lilith. A Sumerian relief, now popularly available in reproduction, shows her with owl's feet, standing on the backs of a pair of lions and holding the Sumerian version of the Ankh in each hand.
- iv) Kites. A carrion-bird, related to the vulture. (Archive Editorial Note: This is an error. Kites are not carrion-eaters, and while they are raptors like vultures, they are not in the vulture family. They are in the hawk and eagle family.)
- v) Now you know where the term comes from! Love is the law, love under will. Christeos Pir ... And the just man rages in the wilds where lions roam.

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## The Fallen Temple: The Search for the White Goddess

The White Goddess is one of the names given to the Earth Mother; the Moon goddess, to Venus, Astarte, Lilith, Belili, the Muses, the Three Graces and to innumerable other female deities. She is found in the myths and legends of all cultures. The stories and attributes of the white goddess are remarkably similar in nations as far apart as Ireland and China, and this points to a very ancient common source for the myths, which appear to have come out of Africa with Homo sapiens 100,000 years ago.

This was a nature-based religion which involved close observation and celebration of the seasons and of the moon and the planets. Its bible was written in the stars for all to see, and its hymns were the songs of birds and the sighings of the breeze.

The worship of the White Goddess reached its highest level in the time of the Minoans (say 1600 BC). In that period, the sea-trading Minoans carried their religion from their ports in the Mediterranean as far as Ireland in the west; and to tropical Asia in the east. Of the goddess-temples founded, the highest was may have been that of Sappho on the island of Lesbos.

The goddess-temples are of great importance to scholars, for they are the source of the alphabet we use; the musical scales we use, of the concept of poetry, of the calendar, of astronomy and history, and of formal mathematics and the sciences.

This culture fell in a cataclysm in approximately 1600 BC, but was resumed by Achaeans (proto-Greeks), and by other civilisations honouring the nature goddess.

The temple's role at the pinnacle of human culture and achievement lasted until the second century anno domine, when the high priestess of the temple of Isis was murdered. The fall of the temple on the Nile marked the end of goddess-worship as a manifest or established religion, and the beginning of the Goddess' long career in hidden religion, that is, in the occult.

## **The Dark Goddess: Ereshkigal, Lilith and Hecate**

Before the sages of the first Diaspora of Hebrews into Babylon invented the idea of monotheism to accommodate the necessity of making their Yahweh portable, Judaism was a polytheistic religion, which borrowed much of its mythology from the surrounding cultures, including ancient Sumer and Greece.

The pantheons of all of these ancient cultures, Sumer, Israel and Greece, included Goddesses in all of their cyclical aspects, birth, life and death. The cultures and religions of Sumer and ancient Greece are gone; however, Judaism and Christianity flourish as the cultural and religious underpinning of much of the western world.

Its monotheistic metaphors have evolved in a way that exclude all but male deity as supreme, and where remnants of female deity are extant, they are diminished in importance (the Virgin Mary, in New Testament Christianity) and their dark aspects are demonized (Lilith, in Old Testament Judaism.)

To survey all of the Goddess or even just the three aspects of a limited number of Goddesses in the ancient world would take volumes. An attempt to handle any more of the many dark Goddesses, for instance Kali of the Indian pantheon or any of the many dark Goddesses of the pre-Islamic world, China, Japan, Hawaii, or the pre-conquest Americas, would take us beyond the boundaries of a discussion of "Western Civilization from Ancient Sumer to the Renaissance;" therefore, I will limit my exploration to three of the many dark goddesses: Ereshkigal of ancient Sumer, Lilith of ancient Israel, and Hecate of ancient Greece.

## **Who are these Goddesses, how are they alike and in what ways do they differ?**

**In what ways do they reflect the cultural metaphors of their own time and how can these metaphors be appropriated toward the re-empowerment of women today?**

In the cosmology of ancient Sumer, the primeval sea (abzu) existed before anything else, and within that, the heaven (an) and the earth (ki) were formed. Ki is likely to be the original name of the earth goddess, whose name more often appears as Ninhursag (queen of the mountains,) Ninmah (the exalted lady,) or Nintu (the lady who gave birth.) It seems likely that she and An (god of heaven) were the progenitors of most of the gods.

Ninhursag, as the mother goddess, assisted in the creation of man by offering constructive criticism to the god as he shaped several versions from clay. Here we see the goddess as co-creator and counselor.

Sumerian divine laws, the "me," were guarded by Enki (lord of the watery abyss.) Inanna (goddess of love and war) objected to being given too little power from Enki's decrees so she got him drunk and he granted her dominion over arts and crafts, as well, for a total of ninety four me.

By the time Enki sobered up and tried to retrieve the me, Inanna had already safely delivered them to her cult center at Erech. Here we see the goddess able to negotiate on her own behalf and able to oversee divine law.

The city leaders of ancient Sumer had a duty to please the town's patron deity, not only for the good will of that god or goddess, but also for the good will of the other deities in the council of gods.

Many secular kings claimed divine right; Sargon of Agade, for example, claimed to have been chosen by Inanna. If goddesses could confer power on mortal kings, we can assume that they held great personal power separate from that of the gods. The temple was staffed by both priests and priestesses.

While we do not know if the priestesses were dominant or even co-equal with the priests, we do know that they were present and had autonomous authority. During the annual New Year celebrations, the king, in a symbolic representation of the resurrected fertility god, Dumuzi, would be ritually married to Inanna's earthly representative. If the king's marriage to a goddess was necessary to assure fertility of the crops, we can presume that the importance of the female in Sumerian society was primal.

Ereshkigal, variously considered Inanna's sister or sister-in-law, was supreme goddess of the underworld. When angered, Ereshkigal's face grew livid and her lips grew black.

She did not know why Inanna would visit her, but she allowed her in, and then instructed Namtar, her messenger and vizier, the Fate-Cutter, the herald of death, to release his diseases upon Inanna. Ereshkigal had a palace in the underworld and was due a visit by those entering.

When Inanna trespassed on her domain, Ereshkigal "...fastened on Inanna the eye of death. She spoke against her the word of wrath. She uttered against her the cry of guilt. She struck her. Inanna was turned into a corpse,...And was hung from a hook on the wall."

When Nergal, the unsparing god of the underworld, arrived to give Ereshkigal a throne upon which to sit and give judgement, she offered him food, drink, a footbath, and enticed him with her body. Eventually he succumbed and they slept with each other for seven days.

Enraged when he wished to leave her, she sent Namtar to heaven to request that the gods send Nergal to her to be punished as one of the few favors she had ever received. If they would not, she threatened to raise the dead who would then eat and outnumber the living. Nergal was brought back.

In some versions of the myth, Nergal took control of Namtar's attendant demons, grabbed Ereshkigal from her throne by the hair, and threatened to decapitate her. In this position she proposed marriage to him. In both versions he accepted, they were married, and he became her consort.

Belit-tseri, the female tablet-scribe, knelt before Ereshkigal and Sumuqan, the cattle god resided in her underworld court. Heroes and priests resided there, as well, and mighty kings served others food. So we can see that Ereshkigal had actual, not referred, power.

She ruled death as an equal portion of the span from creation to destruction. She judged and commanded both men and women.

She had sexual autonomy and authentic agency. She acknowledged and displayed her rage without apology. She had genuine bargaining power and was able to use it even under extreme duress.

Traces of the Sumerian religion survive today and are reflected in writings of the Bible. As late as Ezekiel, there is mention of a Sumerian deity. In **Ezekiel 8:14**, the prophet sees women of Israel weeping for Tammuz (Damuzi) during a drought.

The bulk of parallels, however, can be found much earlier in the book of Genesis. The second chapter of Genesis introduces the paradise, Eden, a place which is similar to the Sumerian Dilmun, described in The Myth of Enki and Ninhursag. Eden, "in the East" (**Genesis 2:8**) has a river which also "rises" or overflows, to form four rivers including the Tigris and Euphrates.

It too is lush and has fruit bearing trees. (**Genesis 2:9-14**) The prologue of The Epic of Gilgamesh may contain the predecessor to the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

This tree not only contains a crafty serpent, but also Lilith, the legendary first wife of Adam. The huluppa tree is transplanted by Inanna from the banks of the Euphrates to her garden in Uruk, where she finds that "...a serpent who could not be charmed made its nest in the roots of the tree. The Anzu bird set his young in the branches of the tree, and the dark maid Lilith built her home in the trunk."

In the introduction to his book, *Lilith's Cave: Jewish Tales of the Supernatural*, Howard Schwartz says that of all the myths with biblical origins and rabbinical popular embellishments, none has had more sway than that of Lilith. Schwartz contends that much of the demonic realm in Jewish folklore grew out of this multifaceted legend, which came into being as a commentary on one passage of the Bible, "Male and Female He created them." (**Genesis 1:27**)

This passage was interpreted by the rabbis to mean that the creation of man and woman was simultaneous, whereas the later accounts of the creations of Adam and Eve appeared to be sequential. Working on the assumption that every word in the Bible was literally true, say Schwartz, the rabbis interpreted this contradiction to mean that the first passage referred to the creation of Adam's first wife, whom they named Lilith, and the other referred to the creation of Eve.

Lilith, whose name actually appears in the Bible only once, in the passage from Isaiah, "Yea, Lilith shall repose there," (**Isaiah 34:14**) refers, Schwartz feels, to a Babylonian night demon.

Schwartz goes on to say that of the post-biblical texts, a few references to Lilith are found in the Talmud, where she is described as a demoness with long black hair, and a demoness with identical characteristics is found in the apocryphal text The Testament of Solomon, but the earliest version of the legend that portrays all of the essential aspects of Lilith is The Alphabet of Ben Sira, of Persian or Arabic origin, in the eleventh century.

This legend tells how God created a companion for Adam and named her Lilith, but Lilith and Adam argued over everything, with Lilith refusing to let Adam dominate her in any way. Instead, she insisted that they were equal.

Eventually Lilith pronounced the ineffable name of God and flew out of the Garden of Eden to the shore of the Red Sea, where she made her home in a cave. She took as lovers all the demons who lived there, giving birth to a great multitude, which explains the proliferation of demons in the world.

In citations to other works, Schwartz goes on to relate the tale of Lilith being threatened by angels and her growth into a "negative female archetype who is assertive, seductive, and ultimately destructive."

Many Feminist scholars, unhappy with this reduction of Lilith, have gone back over the texts and come to a new understanding. One such is Khephera in her article, "Lilith."

In a discussion of the historical origins of Lilith, she points out that the biblical Lilith was not originally found in the pantheon of ancient Sumer, but her roots extend back that far. In the Sumerian lexicon, "Lil" means "Air, " and the oldest known term relating to Lilith is the Sumerian "Lili," (pl. Lilitu) which means "breath" or "spirit."

Therefore, the Lilitu were either a specific type of demon or were simply spirits in general. Khephera goes on to point out that Lilith is thought to have been a Sumerian succubus, and there was such a creature in Sumer-Babylonia known as the "Ardat Lili." An Ardat (pl. Ardatu) was a young woman of marriage age; hence, the Ardat Lili was a young female spirit, a succubus, the demoness known as the "night hag," who was thought to cause erotic dreams and rob males of their semen and spiritual vitality.

Khephera dismisses the two instances that are generally seen as proof of the biblical Lilith's existence in Sumer. One is the myth in which a female demon takes up residence within Inanna's sacred Tree of Life, thus stunting the tree's growth and reproduction; and the famous plaque depicting a woman with owl talons and wings standing on two lions and flanked by two owls. She credits the errors to mistranslations of the Sumerian language by Samuel Noah Kramer. She also discredits, as a Quabalistic mistranslation, the biblical reference in Isaiah which makes the name "Lilith" synonymous with "Screech Owl."

In giving a post-biblical overview of the various myths of Lilith's defiance, Khephera concludes that In his attempt to mate with Lilith, Adam demanded that he be on top, however, Lilith refused, asserting their equality.

Adam, feeling himself to be made in the image of God, and therefore superior to Lilith, who he felt was merely created by God as his helpmeet, would not allow it. Lilith went to God and seduced Him.

God, because of his soft heart, was finally lulled into revealing his sacred name, whereupon Lilith pronounced the name and flew away from the garden and Adam forever. She took up residence in a cave on the shore of the Red Sea, where she remains until today. Within, she accepted the demons of the world, and their king, Asmodeus, as her lovers and spawned many thousands of demon children. This is how Lilith became known as the Wife of Asmodeus--Mother of Demons.

Adam, meanwhile, missed Lilith and went to God, who agreed that his creatures should not so easily depart his realm. God dispatched three enforcer angels to retrieve her, but when they found her and demanded her return, she refused.

They threatened to slay one hundred of her demon children each day until she obeyed, but she exclaimed that even that fate was better than returning to Eden and submission to Adam. As the enforcers carried out their threat, Lilith made a terrible proclamation: in return for the pain delivered upon her, she would slay the children of Adam, and even their mothers during labor.

Additionally, she vowed to attack men in their sleep, steal their semen, and give birth to more demon children to replace the ones she would lose each day. In her anguish, she made one concession: whenever she saw displayed, the names of the three angels who opposed her, no one in that place would be in danger.

Khephera, in giving the Qabalistic interpretation, notes that while these concepts developed well after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70AD, the Temple destruction and the carrying of its treasures and most of the Israelites into Babylonia played a pivotal role in the mythos.

With this first Diaspora it was thought that the perfect union between the Lord (Adonai) and his Kingdom was in danger, so he withdrew from the world and refused to meet with his feminine side, the Shekhinah (Heb.: Presence) in an impure fashion.

The Shekhinah, herself, was thought to have been taken into captivity and raped there continuously. Lilith symbolized the very people who held the Shekhinah captive; she was the harlot, the Whore of Babylon, but because it was thought that God could not be without a Goddess, he was forced to mate with Lilith in order to sustain balance in the world. Thus, Lilith made the transition from mere demoness to Dark Goddess, the Wife of God.

The Qabalists felt it was their duty to reunite the Shekhinah with Adonai. It was felt that on the Sabbath, Lilith had no power because of the holiness of the day; on that day Lilith was forced to retreat into the desert where she screamed until sundown. Khephera notes that in the New Testament Book of Revelation this symbolism is remembered in the passages where the Whore of Babylon is supplanted in power by the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.

It is clear to many Feminists that, In whichever way we choose to interpret the mytho-historic Lilith, there are certain of her characteristics which can not be overlooked and which are virtually never disputed.

Lilith, like Ereshkigal, had actual, not referred, power. She ruled death as an equal portion of the lifespan from creation to destruction.

She, like Ereshkigal, judged men and while she did not command them, she challenged their authority when they attempted to command her. She, like Ereshkigal, had sexual autonomy and authentic agency. She, like Ereshkigal, acknowledged and displayed her rage without apology.

She, like Ereshkigal, had genuine bargaining power and was able to use it even under outrageous coercion. Additionally, she was compassionate to those women and children who acknowledged and honored her.

With Greek thought, we see the worldview of life becoming cyclical, rather than linear. Hecate (Gr: Hekate), according to the *Wisdom of the Earth: Encyclopedia of*

The Goddess, was the Death Goddess, Crone Mother, and known "Queen of Witches" in Christian myth and legend. She descended from the Egyptian Heqit, Heket, or Hekat: a wisewoman, priestess who held the sacred "Mother's Word of Power," the hakau, in trust.

Like all other forms of the Triple Goddess, she was associated with the moon: she was associated with Selene (Moon;) Artemis (Huntress, Lady of Wild Beasts;) and Persephone (Queen of the Dead.) Among Greeks she was Queen of Ghosts and the Crossroads, where many midnight rituals took place. She was the destroyer; newborn children and animals were sacrificed to her.

She was the giver of rain as well as harvest storms. Her major festival was celebrated on August 13th. But as Moon Goddess she is best known: the dark of the moon symbolizes divination, illumination, the powers of healing. Darkness is the time of tactility and of the voice, so this Dark Goddess presides over love-magic, metamorphosis, wonder-working, and medicinal healing.

Often depicted as a Hag, the popular image of Hecate as an ugly old witch is false. In ancient societies she was considered a "Holy Woman," or "Wisewoman;" a female shaman of pre-Christian Europe, or tribal matriarch who knew the wise ways of nature, healing, divination, civilized arts, and the traditions of the Goddess.

In his article "Hekate in Early Greek Religion," Robert Von Rudolph notes that the traditional view of Hecate in most popular and academic books is that She is benefactor of malevolent sorceresses and queen of restless ghosts and other nasty creatures of the night; in short, a Goddess of "Witches" in the pejorative sense.

Recent books written by and for modern Pagans, on the other hand, tend to portray Her as a beneficent, grandmotherly Goddess of the Moon, magic, and Witches in the positive sense.

Supporters of both of these viewpoints site seemingly contradictory evidence, an example of which is the difference between the writings of Hesiod of Archaic Greece, who honors Hekate for Her powers over Sky, Earth and Sea, but not the Underworld, with status second only to Zeus, and Horace of Imperial Rome who presents Her as the object of debased worship of grotesque, supernatural, fairytale women who work necromancy in graveyards.

Von Rudolph feels that neither is true and that an underlying problem is that it is wrong to assume that there was a single manifestation of Hecate; that evidence shows a much greater diversity than historical researchers usually allow for.

He points out that no Greek deity was conceived of in the same way by everyone at any single time or place in antiquity.

In his study, Von Rudolph found that the limited record indicates that in early times Hekate was a secondary figure who could serve one or more specific functions, none of which were unique to Her.

These can be categorized under the ancient titles Propylaia, literally "the one before the gate;" Propolos, "the attendant who leads;" Phosphoros, "the light bringer;" Kourotrophos, "child's nurse;" and Chthonia, which translates simply as "of the Earth," but implies Goddess of the Earth.

According to Von Rudolph, there is no doubt that by 400BCE the image existed of female followers of Hekate working magic, alone at night in remote places. And, while they were intended as evil figures, there is also evidence throughout antiquity that shows public displays of devotion to Hekate, often for the common good of the community.

**Is Hecate, then, wisewoman or sorceress, shamanic diviner or Crone Mother, healer or necromancer, priestess or hag, holy woman or Queen of ghosts, illuminator or Goddess of Midnight, Moon Goddess or Death Goddess, Goddess of love or Goddess of storm, Goddess of metamorphosis or Goddess of the Crossroads, matriarchal tribal grandmother or Queen of Witches?**

Rather than haggle over the bones, as it were, many Feminists would simply say "yes, Hecate is all of these!" Hecate is a Destroyer Goddess and destruction is part of the cycle of life.

### **But, how does She measure up to Ereshkigal and Lilith?**

Hecate, like her earlier counterparts in Israel and Sumer, had real, not referred, power. She ruled death as an equal portion of the lifecycle from creation through destruction through creation again. While we hear nothing of Her judging, commanding or challenging men, neither do we hear of any attempt by men to rule over Her.

She, like Ereshkigal and Lilith, had sexual autonomy and authentic agency. She, like Ereshkigal and Lilith, acknowledged and displayed her fury without defense. She, like Ereshkigal and Lilith, had genuine power and was able to use it. And, like Ereshkigal and Lilith, Hecate was benevolent to those women who honored Her.

Many Feminists today are returning to the ancient Pagan religion of the Great Goddess in all Her aspects: Maiden, Mother, Crone; life-giver, life-sustainer, life-destroyer.

In Her Crone/ Destroyer manifestation she is a model for the re-empowerment of women who reclaim

- their right to command and to challenge authority,
- their prerogative to exercise agency in their own lives and to negotiate on their own behalf,
- their license to sexual autonomy,
- the accuracy of their judgement,
- the validity of their anguish,

- the authenticity of their rage, indeed, the majesty of their own power when looking on Her awe-full face.

## Symbols of the Goddess

As the goddess lays claim to the heavens and all in it, and to all living things as well as to the seas and all things wet, there is no limit to the number of things which could be said to be her symbols. This, therefore, is only a partial listing:

- ◆ **Animals:** the Bull; Horses, the Python, any white animal
- ◆ **Colours:** white; red, black (of the Triple Goddess) and blue and green (of Aphrodite Anadyomene, the sea goddess)
- ◆ **Birds:** the halcyon (kingfisher) the raven; the dove, the heron (or crane)
- ◆ **Fish:** all sea creatures, the dolphin, and the python because it was thought a land-going fish, and the salmon.
- ◆ **Letters:** the vowels; and the consonants b, c, f, q, v, w, z
- ◆ **Metals:** silver, because it is the colour of the moon
- ◆ **Mirrors:** the looking glass; and reflections from water
- ◆ **Music:** music based on the pentatonic scale; the Phrygian mode, choral music, wind and string instruments but also keyboards (because Santa Cecilia, a Christianised form of the goddess as muse, reputedly invented them).

Generally, the Romantic composers (and in the case of Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, specifically) made goddess music, but the composers of martial (named for the war god Mars) music and heavy metal did not.

Numbers: 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 13, 15, 29 and any larger number which had astronomical or calendrical significance, like 51 (years in a cycle of lunar eclipses).

The number three is the goddess' as the Three Fates, the Three Graces or the Three Furies, while five belongs especially to Venus because when that planet is observed over an eight-year period, it traces a unicursive five-pointed path against the backdrop of the fixed stars (hence the pentagram and the Wicca symbol). The number of her servant and companion Hermes is four because the planet Mercury traces a four-cornered path.

- ◆ **Plants:** all belonged to the goddess Spring, but particularly white or red-flowered ones, or ones with a symmetry based on 5 (like the papaya, which confirms it's goddess nature by yielding women's pharmaceuticals). Roses are symbolic of Aphrodite, the Nile lotus of Isis. Grain plants (for Ceres); grapes, the laurel, the thirteen tree species of the bardic grove and the herbs of the ancient *Materia medica*.
- ◆ **Shapes:** circles; spirals, triangles (with base up or down), five-pointed stars, pots, cups and urns.
- ◆ **Stars:** the planet Venus; the Pleiades, the moon.
- ◆ **Water:** the seas; streams, springs, wells.
- ◆ **music:** Mozart's Queen of the Night aria from *The Magic Flute*. midi file: M Weimer.

# The Story of Lilith

The Alphabet of Ben Sira Question #5 (23a-b)

Tr. Norman Bronznick (with David Stern & Mark Jay Mirsky) (Stern90)

The Alphabet of Ben Sira is the earliest form we know of the Lilith legend familiar to most people (that is, to most people who are familiar with Lilith at all). It is here that we find Lilith as Adam's first wife.

Scholars tend to date the Alphabet between the 8th and 10th centuries, CE. Whether the story itself is older, or, if so, how much older is not possible to say. Amulets like the one described in the first paragraph are, of course, much older. The author of the Zohar, R. Moses de Leon, was aware of the Alphabet's version of Lilith, at least according to Gershom Scholem (Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism, p. 174), but he also knows other, probably older, Lilith traditions which do not mesh well with this one. No attempt is made, apparently, to harmonize them. For one of these other traditions, and comments on whether the author was familiar with the Alphabet, see Treatise on the Left Emanation. The idea of Eve having a predecessor is also not new to Ben Sira, and can be found in Genesis Rabbah . But those traditions make no mention of Lilith, and, in fact, do not mesh well with Ben Sira's version of the story. (AH)

Soon afterward the young son of the king took ill, Said Nebuchadnezzar, "Heal my son. If you don't, I will kill you." Ben Sira immediately sat down and wrote an amulet with the Holy Name, and he inscribed on it the angels in charge of medicine by their names, forms and images, and by their wings, hands, and feet. Nebuchadnezzar looked at the amulet. "Who are these?"

"The angles who are in charge of medicine: Snvi, Snsvi, and Smnglof. After God created Adam, who was alone, He said, 'It is not good for man to be alone' (**Genesis 2:18**). He then created a woman for Adam, from the earth, as He had created Adam himself, and called her Lilith. Adam and Lilith began to fight. She said, 'I will not lie below,' and he said, 'I will not lie beneath you, but only on top. For you are fit only to be in the bottom position, while am to be in the superior one.' Lilith responded, 'We are equal to each other inasmuch as we were both created from the earth.' But they would not listen to one another. When Lilith saw this, she pronounced the Ineffable Name and flew away into the air. Adam stood in prayer before his Creator: 'Sovereign of the universe!' he said, 'the woman you gave me has run away.' At once, the Holy One, blessed be He, sent these three angles to bring her back.

"Said the Holy One to Adam, 'If she agrees to come back, fine. If not she must permit one hundred of her children to die every day.' The angels left God and pursued Lilith, whom they overtook in the midst of the sea, in the mighty waters wherein the Egyptians were destined to drown. They told her God's word, but she did not wish to return. The angels said, 'We shall drown you in the sea.'

"'Leave me!' she said. 'I was created only to cause sickness to infants. If the infant is male, I have dominion over him for eight days after his birth, and if female, for twenty days.'

"When the angels heard Lilith's words, they insisted she go back. But she swore to them by the name of the living and eternal God: 'Whenever I see you or your names or your

forms in an amulet, I will have no power over that infant.' She also agreed to have one hundred of her children die every day. Accordingly, every day one hundred demons perish, and for the same reason, we write the angels' names on the amulets of young children. When Lilith sees their names, she remembers her oath, and the child recovers."

Eliezer Segal's Critique of the Alphabet as a Lilith source.

## **Caballah: Lilith, Queen of the Demons**

There are at least two demonesses named Lilith, and numerous others with similar jobs on the dark side. Samael and his wife Lilith the greater rule over all Targum, **Job 1:15** Lilith, the Queen of Zemargad, launched an attack and seized (the sons of Job) and killed the young men ... (Patai 81:465).

### ***School of the RaShBA***

Then came two women harlots to King Solomon. They were Lilith and Igrat. Lilith who strangles children because she cannot make of them a veil for herself to serve as a hiding place for her. And the second is Igrat. On night King David slept in the camp in the desert, and Igrat coupled with him in his dream. And he had emission, and she conceived and bore Adad (king of Edom). When they asked him, "What is your name?" he said, "Sh'mi Ad, Ad Sh'mi (My name is Ad, Ad is my name)," and they called him Ashm'dai. He is Ashmodai, king of the demons, who deprived Solomon of his kingship and sat on his throne, and therefore he was of the seed of the king of Edom (1Ki. 11:14), for he came from the side of the kingdom of evil. These two women strangled the son of the Shunamite woman.

All (the four queens of the demons, Lilith, Igrat, Mahalath and Naamah) and all their cohorts give birth to children, except Lilith alone, who does not bear, but is just a fornication in the world .... (Patai 81:459).

### ***Meir Arama, Sefer Meir T'hillot, p. 91b***

And know that the kabbalists have written that the woman from the land of Egypt whom his mother took for Ishmael was the daughter of Kasdiel the Egyptian sorcerer. And when Ishmael divorced her, according to the instructions of his father (Abraham), as it is mentioned in the Pesiqta, she was pregnant. And she bore a daughter, and she was Mahalath daughter of Ishmael. And the mother and the daughter participated in that desert in many sorceries. And a spirit ruled over it, Igratiel by name. And that spirit was attracted to Mahalath, who was very beautiful, until she conceived from him and bore a daughter, and called her name Igrat, after the name of the spirit. And thereafter Mahalath became the wife of Esau, and she left the desert. Not so her daughter Igrat, for she and Naamah and Lilith and Nega' rule over the four tequfot (the two solstices and the two equinoxes).

And they said that Lilith fornicates with all men, and Naamah only with the Gentiles, and Nega' only with Israel, and Igrat is sent out to do harm on the nights preceding the Sabbaths and Wednesdays. And behold, Lilith is the scant measure that is abomination (**Mica 6.10**), which Igrat and Naamah carry to the Land of Shinar, as **Zechariah (5.11)** said. And about this it is said to the fearers of God, neither shall any plague (Nega') come nigh thy tent (**Psalms 91.10**) (Patai 81:459f).

***Nathan Nata Poira, Tuv haAretz, p 19***

Know that there are seventy heavenly patrons, one appointed over each nation, and they all are under the rule of Samael and Rahab. Rahab was given as his share all the borders of Egypt, which measures 400 by 400 parsangs Samael was given four kingdoms, and in each of them he has a concubine. The names of his concubines are: Lilith, whom he took as his consort, and she is the first one; the second is Naamah; the third, Even Maskit; and the fourth, Igrat daughter of Mahalath. and the four kingdoms are: first the kingdom of Damascus, in which is found the house of Rimmon; the second, the kingdom of Tyre, which is opposite the land of Israel; the third, the kingdom of Malta, which formerly was called Rhodos (?); and the fourth, the kingdom called Granata (Granada), and some say that it is the kingdom of Ishmael. And in each of these four kingdoms dwells one of the four aforementioned concubines. (Patai 81:460f)

Note in the following passages that there are two different characters that go by the name of Lilith. This is also present in the Kohen Brothers.

***R. Ya'aqov and R. Yitzhaq***

Grandmother Lilith the Great--Samael the great demon and great king over all demons has intercourse with her. And Ashmodai king of the demons has intercourse with Little Lilith. The demon whose name is Qaftzefoni, on rare occasions, when permission is granted him, has intercourse with, and attaches himself to, and loves, a creature whose name is Lildtha (Lilith), and she resembles Hagar the Egyptian. A great jealousy sprang up between Samael the greater prince of all and Ashmodai king of the demons over Lilith who is called Lilith the Maiden, and who has the form of a beautiful woman from the head to the navel, and from the navel down (she is) flaming fire. Like mother like daughter... And there is no good intention in but only to arouse wars and all kinds of destruction. And they are occupied with war, the war between Lilith the Daughter, and Grandmother Lilith ... (Patai 81:464)

And they say that of the offspring of Ashmodai and Lilith his wife was fashioned a great prince in heaven who rules over eighty thousand destroyers and despoilers, and he is called Sword of Ashmodai the King. And his face flames like the fire of flame. (Patai 81:469)

***Moses Cordovero, Pardes Rimmonim 186d***

The ancient ones explained that there are two Liliths, one little and one great. The great one is the spouse of Samael, and she is a woman of harlotry, and the little one is the spouse of Ashmodai. And about this Lilith, the bride of Samael, the Geonim explained the she controls 480 legions as is the numerical value of her name. And on the Day of Atonement they go forth into the deserts, they march, and she screeches for she is the princess of screeching And Mahalath daughter of Ishmael, she too is a concubine of Samael, and the two (Lilith and Mahalath) go forth with 478 legions. She goes and sings in the Holy Tongue songs and paens. And when the two meet on the Day of Atonement they quarrel there in the desert.

They strive, the one with the other, until their voices rise up to heaven, and the earth shakes with their clamor. And all this is brought about by the Holy One, blessed be He, so that they should not accuse Israel while they (Israel) pray.

And others wrote that that husk (i.e., demoness) is called Meshullahel (Messenger of God), and the reason is that she sends out evil angels, may the Merciful One destroy them!

And we found it written that the wicked Samael and the evil Lilith have the likeness of a couple which, with the intermediacy of a groomsman, receives an emanation of evil and insolence, flowing from the one to the other. And about this mystery it is written,

And on that day the Lord with His sore and great and strong sword will punish Leviathan the Slant Serpent, and Leviathan the Tortuous Serpent, and He will slay the Dragon that is in the sea (Isa. 27:1). Leviathan is the connection and the coupling between the two who have the likeness of serpents.(2) Therefore it is doubled: the Slant Serpent corresponding to Samael, and the Tortuous Serpent corresponding to Lilith.... (Patai 81:464f)

The Dragon is the Blind Prince who has the likeness of an intermediary groomsman between Samael and Lilith, and his name is Tanin'iver, Blind Dragon. And he is like a blind dragon...and it is he who brings about the adhesion and coupling between Samael and Lilith. Had he been created whole, in the completeness of his emanation, he would have destroyed the world in one minute. (Patai 81:458)

### ***Yalqut R'uvani 147a***

And the Kabbalists said that the prince who serves before her is called Sariel (My Prince is God), and they have received the tradition that this prince is the greatest king of the demons who rule in the air. In the middle of the night of Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), forced by the acts of the sages and elders, Sariel comes against his will, together with 131 warriors, flying in the air, and their faces are aflame with sparks of fire.

And the scribe whose name is Pifiron brings, written and sealed by the hand of Sariel, all the secrets of the firmament, and reveals them to the elders. And from the emanation of Lilith's prince come spirits and demons and Lilin, and evil spirits who have the likeness of humans.

And just as all that time Adam was separated from Eve he begot spirits and demons and Lilin and all kinds of harmful spirits, likewise Above, so to speak, a spirit of spiritual seduction emerged from Lilith and brought accusations against the attribute of the Foundation of the World (3).

And from that time on alien and evil cohorts were born, destroyers of the world of Above and of Below. And the Holy Seed had no power to materialize, except in two or three persons such as Seth, Enoch, Metushelah, Noah, Sem and Eber, but most of the world were idolaters. (Patai 81:467)

### ***Bacharach, 'Emeq haMelekh, 179d-180a***

The Lilin multiply like humans, eat and drink and die. And they are from the six earths which lie beneath us.

And Lilith came against the will of Adam and became hot from him. And they (the inhabitants of Adama, the second from below of the seven earths) are always sad, full of sorrow and sighs, and there is no joy at all among them.

And those cohorts can fly up from there to this world on which we stand, and they become harmful demons. And then they return there and offer prayers to God, the Creator of the world ... (Patai 81:469).

1. The author identifies the "two women" mentioned by Zechariah with Igrat and Naamah, just as he identifies "Wickedness" with Lilith ... (Patai, n. 11).

**Zechariah 5:5-11** reads: *Then the angel who talked with me came forward and said to me, "Look up and see what this is that is coming out." I said, "What is it?" He said, "This is a basket coming out." And he said, "This is their iniquity in all the land." Then a leaden cover was lifted, and there was a woman sitting in the basket! And he said, "This is Wickedness." So he thrust her back into the basket, and pressed the leaden weight down on its mouth. Then I looked up and saw two women coming forward. The wind was in their wings; they had wings like the wings of a stork, and they lifted up the basket between earth and sky. Then I said to the angel who talked with me, "Where are they taking the basket?" He said to me, "To the land of Shinar, to build a house for it; and when this is prepared, they will set the basket down there on its base." (NRSV)*

2. On BlindDragon as the sexual go-between for Lilith and Samael see Lilith, Samael and BlindDragon".
3. One of the divine attributes ... (Patai, n. 12).