

Lilith: Queen of the Demons

Tanakh

Isaiah 34:14

Wildcats shall meet hyenas, Goat-demons shall greet each other; There too the lilith shall repose And find herself a resting place.	וּפְגָשׁוּ צִיִּים אֶת-אַיִים וְשָׁעִיר עַל-רֵעֵהוּ יִקְרָא אֶדְ-נָשִׁם הַרְגִיעָה לִילִית וּמָצְאָה לָהּ מְנוּחַ:
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Lilith in Classical Rabbinic Literature

BT Eruvin 100b

(In a list of curses upon women, as a result of Eve's behaviour)

It was taught in a mishnah extraneous to our mishnah (i.e. a baraita) that she grows her hair [long] like a lilith/Lilith, and sits and urinates like a domestic beast and serves as a pillow for her husband.	בְּמַתְנִיתָא תָּנָא: מְגַדֶּלֶת שֶׁעַר כְּלִילִית, וְיוֹשֶׁבֶת וּמִשְׁתַּנֶּת מִיָּם כְּבֵהָמָה, וְנֹעֲשִׂית כַּר לְבַעֲלָהּ
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BT Shabbat 151b

Rabbi Hanina said: It is forbidden to sleep alone in a house, and anyone who sleeps alone in a house - a lilith/Lilith will seize him.	אָמַר רַבִּי חֲנִינָא: אָסוּר לִישֹׁן בְּבֵית יְחִידִי, וְכָל הַיֹּשֵׁן בְּבֵית יְחִידִי — אַחֲזָתוֹ לִילִית
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The Myth of Adam's First Wife

Genesis 1:27

And God created the human in God's image, in the image of God God created him, male and female God created them.	וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָם:
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Genesis 2:21-23

So God cast a deep sleep upon the Human; and, while he slept, [God] took one of his sides and closed up the flesh at that site. And God fashioned the side that had been taken from the Human into a woman, bringing her to the Human. Then the Human said, "This one at last Is bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh. This one shall be called Woman, For from man was she taken."

וַיִּפֹּל יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם וַיִּשְׁן וַיֵּקַח אֶת־אֶחָד מֵעֲצָתָיו וַיִּסְגֵּר בָּשָׂר מִתְּחִתָּהּ: וַיִּבְנוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הַצֵּלָע אֲשֶׁר־לָקַח מִן־הָאָדָם לְאִשָּׁה וַיַּבְאֶהָ אֶל־הָאָדָם: וַיֹּאמֶר הָאָדָם זֹאת הִפְעָם עֵצָם מֵעֵצָמִי וּבָשָׂר מִבָּשָׂרִי לְזֹאת יִקְרָא אִשָּׁה כִּי מֵאִישׁ לְקָחָהּ־זֹאת:

Genesis Rabbah 18:4

"The man said: *This time*, it is bone from my bones, and flesh from my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, because this one was taken from Man" (Genesis 2:23). "The man said: *This time*" – Rabbi Yehuda bar Rabbi said: At first He created her for him, but he saw her full of viscera and blood, so He distanced her from him, and then fashioned her for him a second time. That is what is written: "This time."

וַיֹּאמֶר הָאָדָם זֹאת הִפְעָם (בראשית ב, כג), רַבִּי יְהוּדָה בַּר רַבִּי אָמַר, בְּתַחֲלָה בְּרָאָהּ לוֹ וּרְאָהּ אוֹתָהּ מְלֵאָה רִירִין וְדָם, וַהֲפִלִּיגָהּ מִמֶּנּוּ, וַחֲזֹר וּבְרָאָהּ לוֹ פַּעַם שְׁנִיָּה, הִדָּא הוּא דְכָתִיב: זֹאת הִפְעָם

Genesis Rabbah 22:2

Yehuda bar Rabbi said: They [Cain and Abel] were quarreling over [who would wed] the first Eve. Rabbi Aivu said: The first Eve had returned to dust.

יְהוּדָה בַּר אַמִּי אָמַר עַל תְּנָה הָרִאשׁוֹנָה הָיוּ מְדִינִין, אָמַר רַבִּי אִיבּוּ תְנָה הָרִאשׁוֹנָה חֲזָרָה לַעֲפָרָה

Incantation Bowls

Bowl 5

Just as there was a certain lilith who strangled human beings, and Rabbi Yehoshua ben Perachya sent a ban against her, but she did not accept it because he did not know her name...

Bowl 013A

For the binding of Bagdana, king of demons and of devils and great ruler of liliths, I adjure you, Habsalas the lilith, daughter of the daughter of Zarni the lilith, whether male or female - I adjure you that you be smitten in the membrane of your heart and with the spear of TYQS the mighty one, who is ruler over demons and over liliths.

Lilith Becomes Adam's First Wife

Aleph Bet of Ben Sira 5

The angels appointed for healing: Sanoy, Sansanoy, Semangalof. When the Holy Blessed One created the first Adam alone, They said, (Genesis 2:18) "It is not good for this Adam to be alone." They created for him a wife out of the Earth like he had been, and called her Lilith. Immediately they began to challenge each other. 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 I am to be 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 world's air. Adam stood in prayer before his Creator and said, "Sovereign of the universe! The woman you gave me has run away from me." Immediately, the Holy Blessed One sent these three angels to bring her back. The

המלאכים הממונים לרפואה סנוי סנסנוי סמנגלוף (11). כשברא הקב"ה אדם הראשון יחיד, אמר לא טוב היות האדם לבדו, ברא לו אשה מן האדמה כמוהו וקראה לילית, מיד התחילו מתגרין זה בזה, אמרה היא איני שוכבת למטה, והוא אומר איני שוכב למטה אלא למעלה שאת ראוייה למטה ואני למעלה, אמרה לו שנינו שוין לפי ששנינו מאדמה, ולא היו שומעין זה לזה, כיון שראתה לילית אמרה שם המפורש ופרחה באויר העולם, עמד אדם בתפלה לפני קונו ואמר, רבש"ע אשה שנתת לי ברחה ממני, מיד שגר הקב"ה שלשה מלאכים הללו אחריה להחזירה, אמר לו הקב"ה אם תרצה לחזור מוטב, ואם לאו תקבל על עצמה שימותו מבניה בכל יום מאה בנים, עזבו אותה והלכו אחריה והשיגוה בתוך הים במים עזים שעתידין המצריים

Holy Blessed One said to Adam, "If she agrees to come back, good. If not, she must permit one hundred of her children to die every day." They departed and pursued her, and overtook her in the midst of the sea, in the mighty waters wherein the Egyptians would ultimately drown. They told her God's word, but she did not wish to return. The angels said, "We shall drown you in the sea." She said to them, "Let me be. I was created only to cause illness to infants. I have dominion over them for eight days after birth if they are male, and if female, after birth for twenty days." When the angels heard Lilith's words, they insisted on taking her. 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 their names on the amulets of young children, and she sees them, she remembers her oath, and the child is healed.

לטבוע בו וספרוה דבר ה' ולא רצתה לחזור, אמרו לה אנו נטביעך בים, אמרה להם הניחוני שלא נבראתי אלא להחליש התינוקות כשהן משמונה ימים מיום שיוולד אשלוט בו אם הוא זכר, ואם נקבה מיום ילדותה עד עשרים יום. וכששמעו דבריה הפצירו לקחתה, נשבעת להם בשם אל חי וקיים שכל זמן שאני רואה אתכם או שמכם או תבניתכם בקמיע לא אשלוט באותו התינוק, וקבלה על עצמה שימותו מבניה מאה בכל יום, לפיכך בכל יום מתים מאה מן השדים, ולכך אנו כותבים שמותם בקמיע של נערים קטנים ורואה אותם וזוכרת השבועה ומתרפא הילד.

Lilith the Feminist Icon

The Coming of Lilith (Judith Plaskow)

In the beginning, the Lord God formed Adam and Lilith from the dust of the ground and breathed into their nostrils the breath of life. Created from the same source, they were equal in all ways. Adam, being a man, didn't like this situation, and he looked for ways to change it. He said, "I'll have my figs now, Lilith," ordering her to wait on him, and he tried to leave her the daily tasks of life in the garden. But Lilith wasn't one to take any nonsense; she picked herself up, uttered God's holy name, and flew away. "Well now, Lord," complained Adam, "that uppity woman you sent me has gone and deserted me." The Lord, inclined to be sympathetic, sent his messengers after Lilith, telling her to shape up

and return to Adam or face dire punishment. She, however, preferring anything to living with Adam, decided to stay where she was. And so God, after more careful consideration this time, caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam and out of one of his ribs created for him a second companion, Eve.

For a time, Eve and Adam had a good thing going. Adam was happy now, and Eve, though she occasionally sensed capacities with herself that remained undeveloped, was basically satisfied with the role of Adam's wife and helper. The only thing that really disturbed her was the excluding closeness of the relationship between Adam and God. Adam and God just seemed to have more in common, both being men, and Adam came to identify with God more and more. After a while, that made God uncomfortable too, and he started going over in his mind whether he might not have made a mistake in letting Adam talk him into banishing Lilith and creating Eve, seeing the power that gave Adam.

Meanwhile Lilith, all alone, attempted from time to time to rejoin the human community in the garden. After her first fruitless attempts to breach its walls, Adam worked hard to build them stronger, even getting Eve to help him. *He told her fearsome stories of the demon Lilith who threatens women in childbirth and steals children from their cradles in the middle of the night.* The second time Lilith came, she stormed the garden's main gate, and a great battle ensued between her and Adam in which she was finally defeated. This time, however, before Lilith got away, Eve got a glimpse of her and saw she was a woman like herself.

After this encounter, seeds of curiosity and doubt began to grow in Eve's mind. Was Lilith indeed just another woman? Adam had said she was a demon. Another woman! The very idea attracted Eve. She had never seen another creature like herself before. And how beautiful and strong Lilith looked! How bravely she had fought! Slowly, slowly, Eve began to think about the limits of her own life within the garden.

One day, after many months of strange and disturbing thoughts, Eve, wandering around the edge of the garden, noticed a young apple tree she and Adam had planted, and saw that one of its branches stretched over the garden wall. Spontaneously, she tried to climb it, and struggling to the top, swung herself over the wall.

She did not wander long on the other side before she met the one she had come to find, for Lilith was waiting. At first sight of her, Eve remembered the tales of Adam and was frightened, but Lilith

understood and treated her kindly. “Who are you?” they asked each other, “What is your story?” and they sat and spoke together, of the past and then of the future. They talked for many hours, not once, but many times. They taught each other many things, and told each other stories, and laughed together, and cried, over and over, till the bond of sisterhood grew between them.

Meanwhile, back in the garden, Adam was puzzled by Eve’s comings and goings, and disturbed by what he sensed to be her new attitude toward him. He talked to God about it, and God, having his own problems with Adam and somewhat a broader perspective, was able to help out a little - but he was confused, too. Something had failed to go according to plan. As in the days of Abraham, he needed counsel from his children. “I am who I am,” thought God, “but I must become who I will become.”

And God and Adam were expectant and afraid the day Eve and Lilith returned to the garden, bursting with possibilities, ready to rebuild it together.