

## LILITH

NO SHE-DEMON has ever achieved as fantastic a career as Lilith, who started out from the lowliest of origins, was a failure as Adam's intended wife, became the paramour of lascivious spirits, rose to be the bride of Samael the demon King, ruled as the Queen of Zemargad and Sheba, and finally ended up as the consort of God himself. The main features of Lilith's mythical biography first appear in Sumerian culture about the middle of the 3rd millennium B.C. What she meant for the Biblical Hebrews can only be surmised, but by the Talmudic period (second to fifth centuries A.D.) she was a fully developed evil she-demon, and during the Kabbalistic age (thirteenth to sixteenth centuries) she rose to the high position of queenly consort at God's side.

## THE BACKGROUND

The earliest mention of a she-demon whose name is similar to that of Lilith is found in the Sumerian king list which dates from around 2400 B.C. It states that the father of the great hero Gilgamesh was a *Lillu*-demon. The *Lillu* was one of four demons belonging to a vampire or incubi-succubae class. The other three were *Lilitu* (*Lilith*), a she-demon; *Ardat Lili* (or Lilith's handmaid), who visited men by night and bore them ghostly children; and *Irdu Lili*, who must have been her male counterpart and used to visit women and beget children by them.<sup>1</sup> Originally these were storm-demons, but, because of a mistaken etymology, they came to be regarded as night-demons.<sup>2</sup>

Lilith's epithet was "the beautiful maiden," but she was believed to have been a harlot and a vampire who, once she chose a lover, would never let him go, without ever giving him real satisfaction. She was unable to bear children and had no milk in her breasts.<sup>3</sup> According to the Sumerian epic *Gilgamesh and the Huluppu Tree* (dating from around 2000 B.C.) Lilith (Lillake) built her house in the midst of the Huluppu (willow) tree which had been planted on the bank of the Euphrates in the days of creation. A dragon set up its nest at the base of the tree, and the Zu-bird placed his young in its crown. Gilgamesh slays the dragon with his huge bronze axe, whereupon the Zu-bird flees with his young to the mountain, and Lilith, terror-stricken, tears down her house and escapes to the desert.<sup>4</sup>

A Babylonian terracotta relief, roughly contemporary with the above poem, shows in what form Lilith was believed to appear to human eyes. She is slender, well shaped, beautiful, and nude, with wings and owl-feet. She stands erect on two reclining lions which are turned away from each other and are flanked by owls. On her head she wears a cap embellished by several pairs of horns. In her hand she holds a ring-and-rod combination.<sup>5</sup> Evidently, this is no longer a lowly she-demon, but a goddess who tames wild beasts and, as shown by the owls on the reliefs, rules by night.

In the course of the ensuing centuries Lilith's shape changed again. A seventh-century B.C. tablet found at Arslan Tash in northern Syria shows her as a winged sphinx across whose body is written the following inscription in the Phoenician-Canaanite dialect:

O, Flyer in a dark chamber,  
Go away at once, O Lili!<sup>6</sup>

These lines are part of an incantation text used to help women in childbirth—one of many extant from the period of the Assyrian Empire and the new Babylonian Kingdom—and they show that by that time the myth of Lilith had all the major features which were elaborated to their full two thousand years later by Kabbalistic Judaism.

#### ISAIAH 34:14

One brief reference to Lilith, and a doubtful one at that, is all that is found in the entire Bible. Isaiah, in describing Yahweh's day of vengeance, when the land will be turned into a desolate wilderness, says:

The wild-cat shall meet with the jackals  
And the satyr shall cry to his fellow,  
Yea, Lilith shall repose there  
And find her a place of rest.<sup>7</sup>

The Mesopotamian and North Syrian material surveyed above supplies the background to this prophetic allusion. Evidently, Lilith was a well known she-demon in Israel of the eighth century B.C., whose name only had to be mentioned to conjure up the beliefs current about her. That she is said to find a place of rest in the desert seems to tie in with the episode recorded in the Sumerian Gilgamesh fragment—after Lilith fled into the desert, she evidently found repose there.

#### THE TALMUDIC LILITH

The information about Lilith contained in the Talmud and the Midrashim of the Talmudic period is meager. One passage states that she had wings;<sup>8</sup> another, that she had long hair.<sup>9</sup> On this basis Rabbi Shelomo Yisḥaḳi, the medieval Talmud commentator (1040-1105), concluded that the *Lilin* (masculine plural of *Lili*, whose feminine singular is *Lilith*), have human form, except that they have wings, in contrast to the demons who have completely human form and eat and drink like humans, and to the spirits who have neither body nor form.<sup>10</sup> It thus appears, that as far as her overall appearance was concerned, Lilith looked very much like the Cherubim. This detail will become significant in connection with the Zoharic myth about the relationship of Lilith to the Cherubim.

Somewhat more is known about the life history of Lilith and her nefarious activities as they were imagined in the Talmudic period. Lilith, we learn, was Adam's first wife. However, Adam and Lilith could find no happiness together, not even understanding. When Adam wished to lie with her, Lilith demurred: "Why should I lie beneath you," she asked, "when I am your equal, since both of us were created from dust?" When Lilith saw that Adam was determined to overpower her, she uttered the magic name of God, rose into the air, and flew away to the Red Sea, a place of ill repute, full of lascivious demons. There, Lilith engaged in unbridled promiscuity, and bore a demonic brood of more than one hundred a day. God, however, sent after her three angels—Senoy, Sansenoy, and Semangelof by name,<sup>11</sup> who soon located her in the same wild waters in which the Egyptians were to drown in the days of the Exodus. The angels told her God's message, but she refused to return. When they threatened her with drowning her in the sea, she argued: "Let me be, for I was created in order to weaken the babes: if it is a male,

I have power over him from the moment of his birth until the eighth day of his life [when he is circumcised and thereby protected], and if a girl, until the twentieth day." The angels, however, insisted, and she, in order to make them desist, swore to them in the name of God: "Whenever I shall see you or your names or your images on an amulet, I shall do no harm to the child." Moreover, she gave her consent to the death of one hundred of her own children day after day—which is the reason that many demons die every day. This agreement between the three angels and Lilith is the basis for writing the names Senoy, Sansenoy, and Semangelof on amulets hung around the necks of new-born babes: when Lilith sees the names, she remembers her oath and leaves the child alone.<sup>12</sup>

However, in spite of her determined refusal to return to Adam, Lilith soon became again attracted to him, and managed to sleep with him against his will. In the meantime Adam had received Eve as his wife, was persuaded by her to eat from the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, and was expelled from the Garden of Eden with the curse of death hanging over his head. When Adam became aware that because of his sin God decreed mortality upon him and all his future descendants, he embarked upon a period of penitence which lasted for 130 years. He fasted, refrained from intercourse with Eve, and, in order to mortify his flesh, wore a belt of rough fig twigs around his naked body. He could, however, not control his involuntary nocturnal emissions which were brought about by female spirits who came and coupled with him and bore him spirits, demons, and Lilin. At the same time, male spirits came and impregnated Eve who thus became the mother of innumerable demon children. The spirits thus procreated are the plagues of mankind.<sup>13</sup>

It should be noted that the succubae and incubi who sought out Adam and Eve in the 130 years of their self-imposed separation remain anonymous in all the sources dating from the Talmudic period. Yet there is basis to assume that Lilith was regarded as one of Adam's succubae, because her seduction of Adam must have served as the mythical prototype and validation of the belief in her power over men who spent a night alone in a house. The danger to which such a man would expose himself was regarded as so acute that Rabbi Hanina, the first century A.D. teacher, warns: it is forbidden for a man to sleep alone in a house lest Lilith get hold of him.<sup>14</sup>

#### LILITH OF THE BOWLS

The relatively scanty Talmudic material about Lilith is complemented by much richer data contained in Aramaic incantation texts found in Nippur in Babylonia, some fifty miles southeast of modern Hilla in Iraq. Excavations conducted by the University of Pennsylvania brought to light several dozen bowls inscribed with magical texts several of which are directed against Lilith or Lilitis. The bowls date from ca. A.D. 600—in other words, are about a hundred years younger than the text of the Babylonian Talmud (which was compiled ca. A.D. 500), but there is every reason to assume that such incantations against Lilith were not the product of the sixth century but go back to earlier periods. In Nippur of the sixth century there was an important Jewish colony (in addition to Mandaeans and other groups), and some of the most interesting bowls were, by their own incontrovertible internal evidence, inscribed and used by Jews. While the Talmud contains the views of the learned elite about Lilith, these bowls show what she meant for the simple people. It is surprising to see to what extent the sages and the quacks shared the fear of Lilith and the belief in her evil nature.

From a synopsis of the incantation texts it appears that Lilith was regarded as the ghostly paramour of men and constituted a special danger for women during

many periods of their sexual life cycle, such as before defloration and during menstruation. A mother in the hour of childbirth and her newborn babe were especially vulnerable and had therefore to be protected from the Liliths. The home, arches, and thresholds were the favorite haunts where the Liliths lurk, ready to pounce on anybody foolish enough to go unprotected. A rough drawing sketched on a Jewish bowl shows Lilith naked, with long, loose hair, pointed breasts, no wings, strongly marked genitals, and chained ankles. At night, the female Liliths join men, and the male Lili-s women, and generate demonic offspring. Once they succeed in attaching themselves to a human, they acquire rights of cohabitation, and therefore must be given a *get*, letter of divorce, in order that they may be expelled. Jealous of the human mates of their bedfellows, they hate the children born of ordinary human wedlock, attack them, plague them, suck their blood, and strangle them. The Liliths also manage to prevent the birth of children by causing barrenness, miscarriages, or complications during childbirth. As Montgomery aptly put it over half a century ago, "the Liliths were the most developed products of the morbid imagination—of the barren or neurotic woman, the mother in the time of maternity, the sleepless child."<sup>15</sup>

Let us now turn to a few examples illustrating the manner in which these magic incantations are phrased. The first is the text of the bowl which carries the sketch of Lilith described above. It reads as follows:

In the name of the Lord of salvations. Designated in this bowl for the sealing of the house of this Geyonai bar Mamai, that there flee from him the evil Lilith, in the name of "Yahweh El has scattered"; the Lilith, the male Lili-s and the female Liliths, the Hag [ghost?] and the Snatcher, the three of you, the four of you, and the five of you. Naked are you sent forth, nor are you clad, with your hair dishevelled and let flying behind your backs. It is made known to you, whose father is named Palhas and whose mother Pelahdad: Hear and obey and come forth from the house and dwelling of this Geyonai bar Mamai and from Rashnoi his wife, the daughter of Marath.

. . . because it is announced to you that Rabbi Joshua bar Perahia has sent against you the ban. . . . A divorce-writ ("*gita*") has come down to us from heaven and there is found written in it your advisement and your terrification, in the name of Palsa-Pelisa ["Divorcer-Divorced"], who renders to thee thy divorce and thy separation, your divorces and your separations. Thou, Lilith, male Lili and female Lilith, Hag and Snatcher, be in the ban . . . of (Rabbi) Joshua bar Perahia. A divorce-writ has come for you from across the sea. . . . Hear and . . . go from the house and dwelling of this Geyonai bar Mamai and from Rashnoi his wife, the daughter of Marath. And again, you shall not appear to them either in dream by night or in slumber by day, because you are sealed with the signet of El Shaddai, and with the signet of the House of Joshua bar Perahia and by the Seven who are before him. Thou Lilith, male Lili and female Lilith, Hag and Snatcher, I adjure you by the Strong One of Abraham, by the Rock of Isaac, by the Shaddai of Jacob, by Yah [is] his name . . . by Yah his memorial . . . I adjure you to turn away from this Rashnoi the daughter of Marath, and from Geyonai her husband the son of Mamai. Your divorce and writ and letter of separation . . . sent through holy angels . . . the Hosts of fire in the spheres, the Chariots of El Panim before him standing, the Beasts worshiping in the fire of his throne and in the water. . . . Amen, Amen, Selah, Halleluyah!"<sup>16</sup>

Only a few comments are needed for the complete understanding of this text. Its intent is clear: Lilith and her company are adjured to leave the house of Geyonai and his wife, Rashnoi, never again to return. The Liliths are given a *get* (letter of divorce) and sent forth naked, just as Gomer was by her husband Hosea.<sup>17</sup> On

another bowl both female and male demons are given their *get* in order thus to rid of them the house and its inhabitants.

“This is the *get* for a demon and spirits and Satan . . . and Lilith in order to banish them from . . . and from the entire house. Yah . . . cut off the king of the demons . . . the great ruler of the Liliths. I adjure you . . . whether you are male or female, I adjure you . . . just as the demons write letters of divorce and give them to their wives and again do not return to them, (so) take your letter of divorce, accept your stipulated share [*ketubba*] and go and leave and depart from the house . . . Amen, Amen, Amen, Selah.”<sup>18</sup>

A medieval story, preserved in Hebrew and Arabic versions, tells of a youth, Dihon ben Shalmon, who marries the daughter of Ashmodai, then gives her a *get*, whereupon she kills him with a kiss.<sup>19</sup> Rabbi Joshua ben Perahia, whose name is invoked several times in the Nippur bowl, was an early first century B.C. sage, one of the *Zugoth* or Pairs, who, evidently, was believed by the sixth century A.D. to have been a powerful exorciser of demons. The divine names and epithets are either traditional Jewish or very close to such forms. The concluding lines show that certain elements of the Merkaba (“Chariot”) mysticism<sup>20</sup> were familiar matters in sixth century Nippur.

Another, considerably later, text is a classical example of a magic ritual whose integral part is its own validation by reference to a myth. It reads as follows:

#### SHADAI

Senoy, Sansenoy, Semangelof, Adam and the Ancient Eve. Out Lilith.<sup>21</sup>

In the name of Y the God of Israel, the Cherubim-sitter, whose name lives and endures forever. The prophet Elijah was walking on the road and met the Evil Lilith and all her band. He said to her: “Where are you headed for, O you Unclean One, and Spirit of Defilement, and all your band where are they going?” And she answered and said to him: “My lord Elijah, I am on my way to the house of a woman in childbirth, Mercada . . .<sup>22</sup> daughter of Donna, to give her the sleep of death and to take her child which is being born to her, to suck its blood, and to suck the marrow of its bones, and to seal its flesh.” And the prophet Elijah, blessed be his memory, said to her: “With a ban from the Name [i.e., God], blessed be He, be you restrained and be you like unto a stone!” And she answered and said to him: “For the sake of Yahweh, release me from the ban and I shall flee and swear to you in the name of Y the God of Israel that I shall leave off these things from this woman in childbirth and her child which is being born to her, and certainly not harm her. And every time that they mention, or I see, my names written, I and my band shall have no power to do evil or to harm. And these are my names: Lilith, Abitar, Abiqar, Amorpho, Hakash, Odam, Kephido, Ailo, Matrota, Abnukta, Shatriha, Kali, Taltui, Kitsha.” And Elijah answered her: “Behold I adjure you and all your band in the name of Y the God of Israel (which name in its) numerical value (equals) 613 (or the number of the religious commandments), (the God of) Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and in the name of his Holy Shekhina, and in the name of the ten Seraphim, Ophanim, and Holy Beasts, and the ten books of the Law, and by the might of the God of Hosts, blessed be He, that you and your band go not to injure this woman, or the child she is bearing, neither to drink its blood, nor to suck the marrow of his bones, nor to seal his flesh, nor to touch them, neither their 256 limbs, nor their 365 ligaments and veins. Just as she cannot count the stars of heaven, and cannot dry up the waters of the sea. In the name of Him who rent Satan, Hasdiel, Shamriel.”<sup>23</sup>

The efficacy of the ritual is insured by reciting the first occurrence of a similar rite, performed by a mythical hero, in this case the prophet Elijah. The structure of the text is identical with the one which validates the efficacy of an amulet inscribed

with the names of Senoy, Sansenoy, and Semangelof, by telling the story of how these three angels extorted a promise from Lilith to keep away from all places where their names are displayed. As we shall see later, the thirteen additional names of Lilith reappear in medieval Jewish magic.

On a third incantation bowl the name "Lilith Buznai" is mentioned several times.<sup>24</sup> Some four centuries later this name in the form "Pizna" reappears in the Midrash Abkir. The context of the bowl says: "charmed art thou, Lilith Buznai and all the goddesses . . . and the 360 Tribes, by the word of the granddaughter of the angel Buznai." Evidently, Buznai was the individual name of a female numen, who is described interchangeably as a Lilith and an angel; she was regarded as a goddess, and had a granddaughter who was antagonistic to her. A similar enmity, as we shall see later, existed between the Elder Lilith and the Younger Lilith, according to Kabbalistic mythology.

### THE BIRTH OF LILITH

Although the major characteristics of Lilith, as we have just seen, were well developed by the close of the Talmudic period, it remained for Kabbalistic mysticism to establish a relationship, and quite a close one at that, between her and the deity. In the six centuries that elapsed between the Babylonian Aramaic incantation texts and the early Spanish Kabbalistic writings Lilith must have greatly extended her influence, for when she reappears in the thirteenth century she not only commands considerably greater attention but is surrounded by a larger retinue and her life history is known in much greater mythological detail.

Her birth, to begin with, is described in a number of alternative versions. One, which ties in directly with the earlier (Talmudic) Lilith image, has it that she was created by God who made her in the same way he fashioned Adam. That is to say, God again turned to the earth to obtain raw material, but this time, instead of using clean earth which was the substance of Adam's body, He—for reasons unknown—took filth and impure sediments from the earth, and out of these He formed a female. As could have been expected, this creature turned out to be an evil spirit.<sup>25</sup>

Others did not regard Lilith as a being created by God but as a divine entity which emerged spontaneously, either out of the Great Supernal Abyss, or out of the *Gevura* or *Din*, the "Power" of God, chiefly manifested as the power of stern judgment and punishment, one of the ten Sefiroth or mystical attributes of God. This stern, punitive aspect of God has, at its lowest manifestation, some affinity with the realm of evil which is referred to as "the dregs of the wine," and it is out of this that Lilith emerged together with Samael:

A mystery of mysteries: Out of the power of the glow of Isaac's noon (i.e., the *Gevura*), out of the dregs of the wine, there emerged an intertwined shoot which comprises both male and female. They are red like the rose, and they spread out into several sides and paths. The male is called Samael, and his female (Lilith) is always contained in him. Just as in the side of Holiness, so in the Other Side (Evil) as well, male and female are contained in one another. The female of Samael is called Serpent, Woman of Harlotry, End of all Flesh, End of Days."<sup>27</sup>

In the mystical writings of the two brothers Jacob and Isaac Hacoen of Segovia, Castile, which antedate the Zohar by a few decades, Lilith and Samael are said to have been born by an emanation from beneath the Throne of Glory, in the shape of an androgynous, double-faced being, corresponding, in the spiritual realm, to the birth of Adam and Eve, who too were born androgynously. The androgynous twin-

couples not only resembled each other, but both "were like the image of what is Above," that is, resembled and reproduced in a visible form the image of the androgynous deity.<sup>28</sup>

Yet another version connects the birth of Lilith with the creation of the luminaries, carefully avoiding, however, any statement to the effect that God actually created her. The "first light," which was the light of Mercy (another of the ten Sefiroth), appeared when, on the first day of Creation, God said "Let there be light."<sup>29</sup> When this light became hidden, Holiness became surrounded by a husk of Evil which idea is expressed by the statement that "a husk (*qelipa*) was created around the brain." This husk, in turn, spread and brought out another husk and this was none other than *Lilith*.<sup>30</sup>

#### LILITH AND THE CHERUBIM

As soon as Lilith was born, or emerged in one of the mysterious ways described above, her longing for male companionship manifested itself. She began to fly about, ascended and descended, until she reached the Cherubim who surrounded God's throne and who, because their faces were like those of small boys,<sup>31</sup> are called in the Zohar "small faces." Lilith attached herself to them and impressed herself into them, and once she succeeded in doing this, she did not want to separate from them. But when God created man, in order to bring this world to completion, He removed Lilith from the Cherubim and made her descend to earth. Lilith, of course, thought that she would become Adam's helpmeet, but again she was frustrated. As she approached Adam, she saw Eve attached to his side, and Eve's beauty resembled the beauty of Above. When Lilith saw the complete image of Adam and Eve together, she understood that she had no chance, and flew back again up to heaven to re-attach herself to the Cherubim. However, by this time the watchers of the Gate of Above barred her way, and God, addressing a stern rebuke to her, cast her into the depths of the sea.<sup>32</sup>

#### LILITH AND ADAM

As noted above, the older sources do not state clearly that it was Lilith herself who, after her Red Sea sojourn, returned to Adam as his succuba. The later sources, however, know it as a fact that this indeed did happen. Adam, we read in the Zohar, succeeded in impregnating Lilith during their early short-lived connubium, then, not having been a suitable helpmeet for him, Lilith left him,<sup>33</sup> to return after a while and force herself upon him. Before doing so, however, she managed to attach herself to Cain and to bear him numerous spirits and demons.<sup>34</sup>

The first medieval source to give the myth of Lilith and Adam in full is the lost Midrash Abkir (ca. tenth century), which is followed by the Zohar and later Kabbalistic writings. Adam, we learn, was a perfect saint, and when he understood that because of his sin—or, as a consequence of Cain's fratricide—death came into the world, he separated from Eve, slept alone, and fasted for 130 years. But Lilith whose name is Pizna,<sup>35</sup>—or, according to the Zohar, two female spirits, Lilith and Naamah—found him, desired his beauty which was like that of the sun disk, and lay with him. The issue of these unions were demons and spirits, called "the plagues of mankind," who lurk under doorways, in wells, and in latrines, and lead men astray.<sup>36</sup>

According to the mythical cosmology of Naphtali Herz. b. Jacob Elhanan (born in the second half of the sixteenth century), in the second of the seven earth layers,

counting from the bottom, dwell "the giant human figures, tall of stature, who were born of Adam in the 130 years during which he begot demons, spirits and Lilin. Lilith used to come to him against his will, and conceive from Adam (and she bore these beings). And they are always sad and full of sorrow and sighs, and there is no joy at all among them. And these hosts can multiply (and ascend) from that earth to this world upon which we stand, and (here) they become harmful spirits, and (then) they return there. . . ."<sup>37</sup>

That Adam begot on Lilith spirits, demons, and Lilin, became a commonplace in the mystical literature of the fourteenth-seventeenth centuries, often with the added explanation that it was Adam's own sin which made it possible for Lilith to overcome him against his will.<sup>38</sup>

#### LILITH THE SUCCUBA

The next period in Lilith's life was spent in two activities—seducing men and killing children:

And she [Lilith] goes and roams at night, and goes all about the world and makes sport with men and causes them to emit seed. In every place where a man sleeps alone in a house, she visits him and grabs him and attaches herself to him and has her desire from him, and bears from him. And she also afflicts him with sickness, and he knows it not, and all this (takes place) when the moon is on the wane.<sup>39</sup>

Spontaneous nocturnal emission is the visible sign of Lilith having succeeded in arousing the desire of a man in his sleep and of having satisfied her own lust through him. The issue of such unions are evil spirits:

She (Lilith) forsakes the husband of her youth [Samael] and descends to earth and fornicates with men who sleep here below, in the uncleanness of emission. And from them are born demons, spirits, and Lilin, and they are called "the plagues of mankind."

In doing so, Lilith takes the shape of a woman or a virgin.<sup>40</sup>

However, Lilith is well able to seduce men not only in their sleep but also awake. Once she succeeds, she turns from a beautiful seductress into a cruel fury, and kills her victim :

She adorns herself with many ornaments like a despicable harlot, and takes up her position at the crossroads to seduce the sons of man. When a fool approaches her, she grabs him, kisses him, and pours him wine of dregs of viper's gall. As soon as he drinks it, he goes astray after her. When she sees that he has gone astray after her from the path of truth, she divests herself of all ornaments which she put on for that fool. Her ornaments for the seduction of the sons of man are: her hair is long and red like the rose, her cheeks are white and red, from her ears hang six ornaments, Egyptian chords hang from her nape (and) all the ornaments of the Land of the East, her mouth is set like a narrow door, comely in its decor, her tongue is sharp like a sword, her words are smooth like oil, her lips are red like a rose and sweetened by all the sweetness of the world, she is dressed in scarlet, and she is adorned with forty ornaments less one. Yon fool goes astray after her and drinks from the cup of wine and commits with her fornications and strays after her. What does she thereupon do? She leaves him asleep on the couch, flies (to heaven), denounces him, takes leave, and descends. That fool awakens and deems he can make sport with her as before, but she removes her ornaments and turns into a menacing figure, and stands before him clothed in garments of flaming fire, inspiring terror and making body and soul tremble, full of frightening eyes, in her hand a drawn sword dripping bitter drops. And she kills that fool and casts him into Gehenna.<sup>41</sup>

Lilith attempted to play this trick on Jacob, but she was no match for him: "Jacob went to her and came to her place . . . and saw all the ornaments of her



house, but escaped from her, whereupon her male, Samael, attacked him and fought him but could not prevail upon him."<sup>42</sup>

Even when a man wishes to engage in lawful sexual intercourse with his wife the menace of Lilith is present:

And behold, that hard shell [i.e., embodiment of evil], Lilith, is always present in the bedlinen of man and wife when they copulate, in order to take hold of the sparks of the drops of semen which are lost—because it is impossible (to perform the marital act) without such (a loss of sparks—and she creates out of them demons, spirits and Lilin. . . . But there is an incantation for this, to chase away the Lilith from the bed and to bring forth pure souls . . . (namely:) in that moment, when a man copulates with his wife, let him direct his heart to the holiness of his Master, and say:

In the name of God.  
 O you who are wrapped in velvet [Lilith],  
 You have appeared.  
 Release, Release!  
 Neither come nor go!  
 (The seed) is not yours,  
 Nor in your inheritance.  
 Go back, go back!  
 The sea rages,  
 Its waves call you.  
 I hold on to the Holy One,  
 Wrap myself into the King's holiness.

Then let him cover his head and his wife for one hour. . . .<sup>43</sup>

The counterpart of these efforts to protect men from the nocturnal enticements of Lilith the succuba is a magic incantation whose purpose is precisely the opposite: to obtain a succuba for the night with the help of that other demon-queen, Igrath bath Mahalath. The formula is contained in a fifteenth century text which reads as follows:

"I adjure you, Ograth [i.e., Igrath] bath Mahalath, queen of the demons, with the great, strong and terrible Name, and with the name of his holy angels, and with the name of Bilar the heroic, king of the demons [the Arabic form of the name] that you send to me X daughter of Y, the beautiful maiden from among your maidens who follow you, whose number is like the number of the days of the year, and with the name of Metratron and Sandalphon, AAA NNN SSS." And this must be done either on the eve of Sunday or one the eve of Wednesday. And one must have a separate room, and white and clean bed and clothes, and the room and the bed should be fumigated with aloe wood. And the knowledgeable will understand.<sup>44</sup>

#### LILITH THE CHILD-KILLER

Following her rejection by the Cherubim, Lilith remained in the depths of the sea until Adam and Eve sinned, "when the Holy One, blessed be He, brought her up, and she obtained power over all those children—the "small faces" of mankind—who deserved to be punished because of the sins of their fathers. She roams all over the world, then approaches the gates of the Garden of Eden and observes the Cherubim watching over the gates. She sits down there, next to the flame of the sword, since it was from that flame that she originated. When the flame turns around (indicating that the world has entered into a phase of punishment), she rushes off and again goes roaming all over the world to seek out the children who deserve to be punished. And she smiles at them and kills them. . . ."<sup>45</sup>

After the completion of her raids on mankind, Lilith returns to the cities of the sea, her headquarters. Only when ultimately God destroys the Evil Kingdom of Rome, will she move there to take up her abode in the eternal ruins.<sup>46</sup>

In the meantime, Lilith "goes out into the world and seeks out children, and she sees the children of mankind and attaches herself to them to kill them and to draw herself into their souls. And as she is about to go into such a soul, three holy spirits [i.e., the three angels Senoy, Sansenoy, and Semangelof] appear there, and they soar toward her and take that soul from her and place it in front of the Holy One, blessed be He, and there (the children) study in front of him."<sup>47</sup>

Thus, even if the angels are unable to save the child's life, they at least save its soul. To make sure that one's child is in no way harmed by Lilith, one must perform the act of procreation itself in holiness:

If a man is in a state of holiness, he has no fear of her (Lilith), because the Holy One, blessed be He, sends those three holy angels whom we mentioned, and they watch over the child (which is being conceived) and she cannot harm him. . . . But if a man is not in a state of holiness, and he draws out a soul from the side of uncleanness, then she comes and plays with that child, and if she kills it, she penetrates that soul and never leaves it.<sup>48</sup>

Some forms of unholiness in sexual intercourse are described by R. Naphtali as follows:

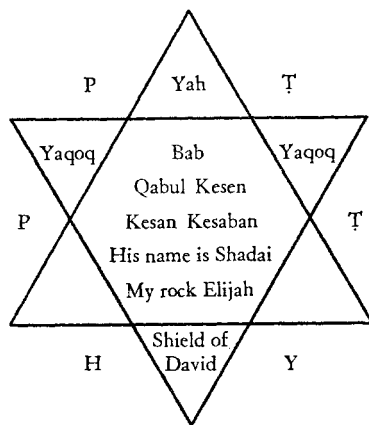
Lilith, God preserve us, has dominion over children who issue from him who couples with his wife in candlelight, or with his wife naked, or at a time when he is forbidden to have intercourse with her. All the children who issue from such unions, Lilith can kill any time she wishes, because they are delivered into her hands. And this is the secret of the children's smiling when they are small—because of Lilith who plays with them.<sup>49</sup>

The myth of Lilith the child-killer remained a potent factor in the lives of tradition-bound Jews down to the nineteenth century. To protect the newborn boy-child against Lilith, they would draw a circle with natron or charcoal on the wall of the birthroom and write into it: "Adam and Eve. Out Lilith!" At the same time, they would write the names of the three angels, Senoy, Sansenoy, and Semangelof, on the door of the room.<sup>50</sup>

If children laugh in their sleep, or if they laugh while they are awake but alone, this is a sign showing that Lilith is playing with them, and especially when this happens on the night of the new moon. Whoever notices that they laugh, will do well to hit them on their nose with his finger and say: "Go hence, Pelonith (i.e., Lilith), you have no portion or inheritance here, you have no satisfaction here!" Then let him recite the entire '*Wihî nosam*' prayer, and do thus three times. . . .<sup>51</sup>

Solomon's dominance over Lilith, which became an integral part of Medieval Jewish and Muslim Arab demonology, retained an important role in Middle Eastern Jewish exorcisms as recently as the early twentieth century. Raphael Ohana writes in his collection of magical remedies:

In another manuscript book I found written the following: Protection from Lilith. Write a seal of King Solomon, peace be upon him, who adjured Lilith that when she would see his seal she and her cohorts would flee, and that she would have no permission to hurt him. And if it be placed on a house, she would not enter it, neither she nor any one of her band. And if it be engraved upon pure silver, it is even better. And this is its shape:<sup>52</sup>



The same magic Seal of Solomon also protects the sick against Lilith, if it is ascertained that she caused the ailment.<sup>53</sup>

The same book contains two further suggestions as to methods one can employ in order to safeguard a woman from Lilith:

And if you place a needle close to the wick in the lamp which is in the house of the woman in childbed, she will be safe from the entry of Lilith. Also, if she take the measure which is used to measure the wheat, and place it close to the bed, and if Lilith is there, she will sit on that measure and will not move from her place until they remove that measure from there. From a Babylonian manuscript book.<sup>54</sup>

#### LILITH AND NAAMAH

Lilith's companion in many of her evil exploits is Naamah, another high-ranking she-demon. Her origin is obscure, but as her name Naamah, "the Charmer," indicates, she is a demoness of extraordinary, irresistible beauty.

In the earlier, Talmudic-Midrashic, mythology, Naamah is still taken to have been a flesh-and-blood woman, the daughter of Lamech and Zillah, and sister of Tubal-Cain,<sup>55</sup> who earned her name by enticing men with the sweet sensual sounds of her cymbals to worship idols, although according to the lone opinion of R. Abba bar Kahana, she was a pious and well-mannered woman who became Noah's wife.<sup>56</sup> Naamah is still a human female according to those myths which tell about her role in seducing the sons of God. She was so beautiful that she led the angels astray, and from her union with the angel Shamdon or Shomron, sprang Ashmodai, who was destined to become the king of the devils.<sup>57</sup>

From being the human mother of Shamdon's demonic brood, Naamah was transformed by the Kabbala into a semi-human, deathless being, who, like Lilith, fulfils the double task of seducing men and strangling children in their sleep. She was so beautiful, that

the sons of man, and even the spirits and demons, went astray after her. R. Yiṣḥaq said: Those sons of God, ʿAza and ʿAzaʿel, went astray after her. R. Shimʿon said: She was the mother of the demons, for she came from the side of Cain, and she, together with Lilith, was appointed over the *asḥara* (strangulation) of children. R. Abba said to him: Did you not say that she was appointed to play with people? He answered: True, she comes and plays with people, and at times she bears them spirit-children, and to this day this is her task. R. Abba said: (Since we know that the demons) die like humans, how can she still be alive? He answered: Right, but Lilith and Naamah, and Igrath the daughter of Mahalath who came from their side, all continue to live until the Holy One,

blessed be He, eradicates the spirit of uncleanness from the world. . . .

Come and see: This Naamah was the mother of demons and from her side come all those demons who lie with men and take the spirit of desire from them, and she makes sport with the men (in their sleep) and causes them to emit seed.<sup>58</sup>

Naamah and her brother Tubal-Cain were descendants of Cain, and the latter was, of course, the son of Satan by Eve:

In the hour when Adam with the supernal image, with the holy image, descended, and those of Above and Below saw him, they all approached him and made him king over this world. After the Serpent came upon Eve and injected his impurity into her, she gave birth to Cain. From there descended all the generations of the sinful in the world, and also the demons and spirits came from there. Therefore, all the spirits and demons are half human, while their other half comes from the supernal angels. Also, all the other spirits which were born of Adam are, likewise, half from Below and half from Above. After they were born of Adam, he begot on those spirits daughters who resembled the beauty of those Above and the beauty of those Below. . . .

And there was one male who came into the world from the spirit of Cain's side and he was called Tubal-Cain. And a female came with him after whom the creatures went astray, and she was called Naamah. From her came other spirits and demons, who hang in the air and announce things to those others who are found below. And this Tubal-Cain brought weapons of killing into the world. And this Naamah . . . is alive to this day and her dwelling is among the waves of the Great Sea."<sup>59</sup>

In the darkness of the night great monsters pursue Naamah: they are Afrira and Qastimon, the two chieftains of the demonic world who

swim about in the Great Sea, and, when night falls, fly away from there and come to Naamah, the mother of the demons, after whom the early divinities went astray. They try to approach her, but she leaps away six thousand parasangs, and takes on many forms in the eyes of men, in order to seduce them.<sup>60</sup>

Once Naamah arrives in our own world,

she makes sport with the sons of man, and conceives from them through their dreams, from the desire of man, and she attaches herself to him. She takes the desire, and nothing more, and from that desire she conceives and brings forth other kinds (or demons) into the world. And those sons whom she bears from men visit the women of humankind who then conceive from them and give birth to spirits. And all of them go to the first Lilith and she brings them up. . . .

At times it happens that Naamah goes forth in the world in order to have intercourse with the sons of man, and a man is found in bounds of desire with her and awakens from his sleep and gets hold of his wife and lies with her, and his urge stems from that desire which he had felt in his dream. In such a case the child which is procreated comes from the side of Naamah, because in her desire he was conceived. When Lilith comes and sees this child, she knows what happened, and she attaches herself to him and rears him like those other children of Naamah, and she comes to him many times but does not kill him. . . . For each time when the moon renews itself in the world Lilith comes and visits all those whom she rears, and makes sport with them and that man suffers damage at that time.<sup>61</sup>

While Lilith and Naamah thus have become unmistakably evil spirits, at least one other time in history they assumed human form—when, in order to try Solomon's wisdom, they assumed the form of two prostitutes and went to Solomon asking for his judgment in their quarrel over the surviving child:

Then came two harlots to King Solomon, and they were Lilith and Igrath [according to other sources: Lilith and Naamah]. Lilith, who strangles the children because she cannot set up for herself, from one of them, a screen to be a hiding place for her(?). And the other is Igrath. . . . One night David was asleep in the camp in the desert, and in his dream Igrath coupled with him and bore Adad [identical with Hadad the Edomite]. And when they asked him "What is your name?" he answered, "My name is Ad, Ad is my name" (*Ad sh'mi* in Hebrew), and they called him Ashm'dai. He is Ashmodai, the King of the demons who deprived Solomon of his kingdom. . . .<sup>62</sup>

King Solomon, it may be remarked here, "had dominion over the demons, spirits and Lilin, and knew the language of each . . . and when his heart was merry with wine, he would command the wild animals, the fowl of heaven, and the creeping things of the earth, as well as the demons, spirits and Lilin, to dance before him."<sup>63</sup>

It was because of Solomon's power over the demons that he was able to resist the Queen of Sheba, who was none other than Lilith.<sup>64</sup> In the Targum to Job 1:15 the name *Sheba*, meaning the Sabaens, is translated as "Lilith, queen of Zemargad."

#### LILITH AND SAMAEI

As we have seen, according to a Zoharic myth Lilith and Samael emerged in an androgynous form out of the "dregs of wine" of the divine punitive power.<sup>65</sup> Another version, which was also current in Kabbalistic circles in the Middle Ages, is silent as to Lilith's provenance, but makes her Samael's wife, and the first among his four wives, to boot. Bahya ben Asher ibn Halawa (died in 1340), the early fourteenth century Kabbalistic Bible commentator, reports the myth as follows:

Four women were the mothers of demons: Lilith, Naamah, Igrath, and Mahalath. Each one of them has her own hosts and classes of spirits of uncleanness, and they have no number. And it is said that each of them rules on one of the four *tequfot* [i.e., the vernal equinox, the summer solstice, the autumnal equinox, and the winter solstice] of the year, when they gather on a lofty peak near the Mountains of Darkness. Each of them rules on her *tequfa* from the hour of sunset until midnight, they and all their hosts. But King Solomon ruled over all of them and called them (his) slaves and slave-women, and used them according to his will. And these four women are the wives of Esau's heavenly patron (i.e., Samael), and following his example, Esau himself took four wives as explained in the Pentateuch.<sup>66</sup>

Nathan Spira (died in 1662), in his *Tubh haAretz*, transmits an interesting variant of the same theme. The four women become the "rulers," in the sense of heavenly patrons, of four kingdoms:

Know that there are seventy heavenly patrons, one appointed over each nation, and they all are under the rule of Samael and Rahab. And behold, Rahab was given as his share all the borders of Egypt which measures 400 by 400 parasangs. And 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 Maskith; and the fourth, Igrath the daughter of Mahalath. And the four kingdoms are: first, the kingdom of Damascus in which is found the House of Rimmon; second, the kingdom of Tyre which is opposite the Land of Israel; third, the Kingdom of Malta which formerly was called Rhodus; and fourth, the Kingdom called Granata, and some say that it is the Kingdom of Ishmael. And in each of these four Kingdoms dwells one of the four aforementioned concubines.<sup>67</sup>

Mixed Egyptian-Arab-demonic descent is attributed to Igrath in a late version of the myth of the four she-demons who rule over the *tequfot*: When Ishmael grew up, his mother Hagar took him an Egyptian wife,

the daughter of Kasdiel the Egyptian sorcerer, and when Ishmael divorced her, as commanded by his father, she was pregnant and gave birth to Mahalath. And the mother and the daughter remained together in that desert which was full of sorcery, and a demon named Igrathiel ruled over it. And this demon was attracted to Mahalath who was very beautiful, and she conceived and bore a daughter whom she called Igrath, after that demon. Thereafter Mahalath left the desert and became the wife of Esau. And her daughter Igrath remained in the desert, and she, Naamah, Pelonith [i.e., Lilith], and Nega<sup>c</sup> rule over the four *tequfot* [i.e., two equinoxes and the two solstices]. Pelonith [Lilith] fornicates with all men, Naamah only with the gentiles, Nega<sup>c</sup> only with Israel, and Igrath is sent out to do harm on the nights preceding Wednesdays and Saturdays. But of those who fear God it is said, "And Nega<sup>c</sup> will not approach your tents."<sup>68</sup>

The marriage between Samael and Lilith was arranged by the "Blind Dragon" who, in Kabbalistic mythology, is the counterpart On High of "the dragon that is in the sea."<sup>69</sup> "There is a dragon of Above who is the Blind Prince, and he functions as the intermediary between Samael and Lilith, and his name is *Taniniver* ("Blind-dragon"). . . . It is he who arranges the match between Samael and Lilith. . ."<sup>70</sup>

Blindragon's place in the mystical hierarchy of demons is described as follows:

Asimon (a demon) rides on Naamah, and Naamah rides on Igrath the daughter of Mahalath, and this Igrath rides on several kinds of spirits and bands of midday-demons; and from the left there is the shape of a serpent riding on a blind dragon, and this dragon rides on Lilith the wicked, may she be destroyed quickly in our days, amen."<sup>71</sup>

However, the marriage of Samael and Lilith was not allowed to prosper. God was apprehensive lest they fill the world with their demonic brood, and, to prevent this, he castrated Samael, also known as the "Angel Satan," or the "Other God." This mythologem, found in several seventeenth century Kabbalistic books,<sup>72</sup> is based on the identification of "Leviathan the slant serpent and Leviathan the tortuous serpent"<sup>73</sup> with Samael and Lilith respectively, and on the reinterpretation of the old Talmudic myth according to which God castrated the male Leviathan and killed the female in order to prevent them from coupling and thereby destroying the earth. Leviathan the tortuous, or crooked, serpent is, to the Kabbalists, Lilith, "who seduces men to follow crooked paths."<sup>74</sup> Once Samael was castrated, Lilith, since "she could no longer couple with her husband," satisfied her desire by fornicating with men who experience nocturnal emissions.

In another fifteenth or sixteenth century Kabbalistic text the Midrashic statement that God "cooled" the female Leviathan is reinterpreted to mean that God made Lilith barren, so that she cannot bear offspring "but is mere fornication."<sup>75</sup>

#### THE TWO LILITHS

The idea that there are many Liliths is, as we have seen, very old. In the Babylonian incantation texts there appear male Lili-s, in addition to the female Liliths, who are the heirs to the third millennium B.C. Sumerian male and female demons similarly named. It remained, however, for the thirteenth century Kabbalists to split the person of Lilith herself into two and to distinguish between an Elder and a Younger Lilith.

In the writings of R. Isaac Hacoheh, the Spanish Kabbalist who flourished about the middle of the thirteenth century, we read that the Lilith who was born androgynously with Samael and who became the wife of that "Great Prince and Great King of all the demons," is Lilith the Elder. In addition to Samael, other demons as well are the bedfellows of this Lilith the Elder who—and this is most remarkable—"is a ladder on which one can ascend to the rungs of prophecy." This can mean only one thing: that Lilith can help those whom she favors—or who gain mastery over her—to rise towards, or actually attain, prophetic powers. Another numinous figure introduced into this mythology is *Qafşefoni*, the Prince and King of Heaven, whose wife is Mehetabel<sup>76</sup> the daughter of Matred. The daughter of this mysterious couple is Lilith the Younger. There seems, however, to be some confusion between Lilith the Younger and Lilith the Elder, because it is the latter who is called *Şefonit* ("Northerner"), which would make her, and not Lilith the Younger, the daughter of *Qafşefoni*:

Know that all the jealousy and quarrel between the Princes of Quarrel and the Prince of Peace . . . is on account of Samael and Lilith who is called Northerner (*Şefonit*), (as it is written) "Out of the North the Evil One shall break forth."<sup>77</sup> Both of them (Samael and Lilith) were born in a spiritual birth as androgynes, corresponding to Adam and Eve, below and above two twin figures. And Samael and Lilith the Elder who is the same as *Şefonit*, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil is the epithet for both. . .<sup>78</sup>

The same author also asserts that "on rare occasions *Qafşefoni* couples with, and adheres to, and loves a creature whose name is *Lilidtha*," who, in a mysterious way, resembles Hagar the Egyptian; but whether this *Lilidtha* is identical with *Qafşefoni*'s own daughter, *Lilith the Younger*, cannot be established.

*Lilith the Younger* became the wife of *Ashmodai*, King of the demons, and out of this union sprang the great prince *Harba di Ashm'dai* ("Ashmodai's Sword"), who rules over 80,000 demons of destruction, and numerous other demon offspring. However, "*Lilith the Younger* who has the form of a beautiful woman from head to navel and from the navel downward is flaming fire—like mother like daughter—"aroused the desire of Samael. This caused intense jealousy between Samael and *Ashmodai* as well as constant fighting between *Lilith the Younger* and Samael's wife, *Lilith the Elder*.<sup>79</sup>

Some three centuries after Isaac Hacoheh, Moses Cordovero (1522-1570), head of the Safed Kabbalists, retells the myth of the two Liliths with the addition of a few interesting details: *Lilith the Elder*, he says, has 480 bands of demons under her command, the number being derived from the numerical value of the letters L Y L Y T (30, 10, 30, 10, 400) making up the name *Lilith*. On the day of Atonement *Lilith the Elder* marches out into the desert and, being the demon of screaming—her name is taken as if derived from the verb Y L L, to scream—spends the day there screaming. Samael, however, also has a concubine named *Mahalath* the daughter of *Ishmael*.<sup>80</sup> She has 478 bands of demons at her disposal—again the letters of her name give the clue to this number (M H L T = 40, 8, 30, 400)—and "she goes and sings a song and a paean in the Holy Tongue. And when the two meet, they fight, on the Day of Atonement, there in the desert, and they taunt each other, until their voices rise to heaven and the earth trembles under their voices. And all this is arranged by God so that they should not make accusations against Israel while they pray (on the Day of Atonement). . . ."

Lilith the Younger is helped in her fight against Lilith the Elder by her own mother Mehetabel.<sup>81</sup>

The mythological motif of enmity between Lilith and her fellow-demonesses, and the resulting advantage for Israel on the Day of Atonement, is treated by other sixteenth-century Kabbalists as well. Abraham Galante (died 1560), an important Safed Kabbalist and contemporary of Moses Cordovero, recounts the entire story of the annual encounter in the desert between Lilith and Mahalath, but gives a somewhat different characterization to one of the two chief she-demons: Mahalath, according to him, is shown by her name to have been a compulsive dancer: as she marches into the desert at the head of her bands of destructive angels, "she goes and dances and gyrates in ringdances" until she and Lilith fall upon each other in a fierce battle.<sup>82</sup>

Lilith's bands, and presumably Lilith herself as well, were imagined in this period as being covered with hair from head to foot, including their faces, but having a bald head. Their fourteen names, derived directly from the older incantation texts,<sup>83</sup> are: Lilin, Abito, Abizo, Amo(z)rpho, Haqash, Odam, (I)kephido, Ailo, Tatrota, Abniqta, Shatrina, Kalubtza, Tiltot, Pirtsha.<sup>84</sup>

But, to return to the two Liliths, this idea is put forward in a different form by Hayyim Vital (1543-1620), a Safed Kabbalist and chief disciple of Isaac Luria. He explains that the original "Lilith the stiff-necked" was the "garb," that is the husk, the outer and evil part, of Eve, the wife of Adam. But, he goes on to say, "there is an even more external (i.e., more evil) Lilith, who is the wife of Samael." In the sequel it is not clear whether Vital speaks of the first or the second Lilith when he says that "there was an angel who was expelled from heaven and he was called "the flame of the revolving sword,"<sup>85</sup> and at times he is an angel and at times a demon called Lilith. And since the female rules at night, and the demons rule at night, she is called Lilith (i.e., "Nocturnal").<sup>86</sup>

The notion that Lilith rules at night goes back to the Zohar where the Biblical expression "dread in the nights" (*pahad ba-leloth*)<sup>87</sup> is explained as "Samael and his female," i.e., Lilith.<sup>88</sup> What is more interesting, however, in Vital's thinking is that he regarded the Lilith and the angel as interchangeable, as appearing once in the shape of one and once in that of the other, as made tangible by the flame of the revolving sword. We shall recall that in the sixth century A.D. Nippur incantation texts the same numen is called once "Lilith Buznai" and once "angel Buznai."<sup>89</sup> The same idea underlies a passage contained in the Zoharic literature itself which reads: "Come and see: The Shekhina is at times called the Mother, at times the Slave-Woman (i.e., Lilith), and at times the King's Daughter."<sup>90</sup>

In other words, circumstances determine whether one and the same feminine divine essence assumes the form of a good or an evil numen. And, since circumstances constantly change, the goddess appears once as good, once as evil. In a different formulation of the idea, Lilith appears as the "nakedness" of the Shekhina, that aspect of her which preponderates in the period of Israel's exile: "When Israel was exiled the Shekhina too went into exile, and this is the nakedness of the Shekhina. And this nakedness is Lilith, the mother of a mixed multitude."<sup>91</sup>

#### LILITH'S TRIUMPH AND END

The hour of Lilith's greatest triumph and the high point in her career came with the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple. When that catastrophe took place,



the King [God] sent away the Matronit and took the slave-woman [Lilith] in her place. . . . Who is this slave-woman? She is the Alien Crown whose first-born God slew in Egypt. . . . She used to sit behind the hand-mill, and now this handmaid is heir to her mistress.<sup>92</sup> Rabbi Shimeon cried and said: "The King without the Matronit is not called King; the King who attached himself to the slave-woman, to the handmaid of the Matronit, where is his honor? . . . He lost the Matronit and attached himself to the Other Place which is called slave-woman. . . . And this slave-woman was destined to rule over the Holy Land of Below, as the Matronit formerly ruled over it. . . ."<sup>93</sup>

The Zoharic idea that the most terrible outcome of the destruction of the Temple and the Exile of Israel was that because of them God was forced to accept Lilith as his consort in place of the Matronit, was further elaborated by R. Shelomo Alqabeş (ca. 1485—1505), the Safed Kabbalist and famous author of the Sabbath-song *Lekha Dodi* ("Come, my friend"). In his mystical philosophy Alqabeş attributes it to the sins of Israel that the Shekhina, Israel's mother, had to leave her husband, God, who is Israel's father, and go into exile together with her children. As a result of this separation, God the father consorted with "the slave-woman," i.e., Lilith, and she became the Mistress of His house. The situation was similar to that of a man who had a good wife, the mother of his sons, and then, in his wrath, he turned away from her and went in to her handmaid and she conceived and bore him a son.

"And it is known that there is no glory for a man except with his wife who was destined for him, but not by adhering to handmaids . . . through which he himself is reduced to a lower rung." Likewise, after the Shekhina in exile

"descended to be with us . . . her rival (Lilith) angers her greatly, and she sobs and sighs because her husband (God) does not throw his light upon her . . . Her joy has fled because she sees her rival in her house, deriding her, to the extent that the Mistress became a handmaid and the handmaid Mistress. And when our Father sees our Mother lying in dust and suffering because of our sins, He too becomes embittered in his heart, and He descends to save her and make the strangers cease violating her. And now, can there be anybody who sees these things without rending his heart to repent and thus to return our Mother to her place and to her palace? . . ."<sup>94</sup>

While thus the Zohar and the later Kabbalists who were influenced by it attributed God's degradation through coupling with Lilith to the cosmic consequences of the destruction of the Temple, the pre-Zoharic gnostic Kabbalists, such as Moses of Burgos, placed the same divine Fall in the very days of Creation. For, they maintained, just as on earth below Lilith and Samael procreated demons and spirits with Adam and Eve, so in the Upper Realm "a spirit of seduction issued forth from Lilith" and seduced God the King, while Samael managed to have his will on the Shekhina.<sup>95</sup>

Whatever the beginnings of this connubium between God and Lilith, it is to continue until the coming of the Messiah will put an end to it:

A voice is appointed to announce to the Matronit and say "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion, shout, O daughter of Jerusalem, behold, thy King cometh unto thee, he is righteous and victorious, lowly and riding upon an ass."<sup>96</sup> . . . . For he would be riding, until that time, in a place which is not his, in an alien place . . . and would remain lowly . . . , for until that time the Righteous One would remain without righteousness, but at that time (he and the Matronit will again) couple with each other and he will become "righteous and victorious" because he will no longer dwell in the Other Side [i.e., will no longer be tied to Lilith]. . . . And God will restore the Matronit to her place as in the beginning. And what will the rejoicing be? Say, the rejoicing of the King and of the Matronit. The rejoicing of the King over returning to her and separating

from the slave-woman, and the rejoicing of the Matronit over coupling again with the King."<sup>87</sup>

Those Messianic days will mark not only the reunion of God and the Matronit and the rejection of Lilith, but also the end of Lilith's existence. For, although Lilith has existed ever since the sixth day of Creation, she is not immortal. In the Days to Come, when Israel will take revenge on Edom, both she, and the Blind Dragon who arranged the match between her and Samael, will be killed.<sup>88</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

It is difficult to evaluate the position of Lilith in Jewish religion and her significance for the Jewish believer. The very fact that as late as the eighteenth or even the nineteenth century the belief in her not only survived but remained a potent factor in religious consciousness and conduct, is in itself surprising. That these beliefs, and, in all probability, the practices as well, retained essentially the same form in which they first appeared four thousand years previously in Sumer, is remarkable. A citizen of Sumer in 2500 B.C. and an East European Hassidic Jew in 1800 A.D. had very little in common as far as the higher levels of religion were concerned. But they would have readily recognized as most familiar each other's beliefs about the pernicious machinations of Lilith, and each other's apotropaic measures resorted to in order to drive her away or escape her enticements.

It is interesting, moreover, to note that both in ancient Sumer and in Kabbalistic Judaism Lilith's career ran very similar courses. She started out in both faiths as a lowly she-demon, whose activities were confined to the nether realms of existence, who was associated with impure nocturnal animals, and who pulled man down to her own base level. Then, in both religions, she succeeded in working herself up, as it were, to higher rungs on the scales of numina, until she became an undoubted goddess in Sumer and the consort of God in Kabbalism. Yet with all these advances in her career, the basic qualities of her personality never changed: she remained the beautiful seductress who joined lonely men in their nocturnal unrest, enjoyed their sex and bore them demonic offspring, while at the same time she found enough time to play her lethal games with children, causing them to laugh happily in their sleep and then strangling them mercilessly so as to get hold of, and array herself in, their innocent souls. There can be little doubt that a she-demon who accompanied mankind—or at least a part of mankind—from earliest antiquity to the threshold of the Age of Enlightenment must be a projection, or objectification, of human fears and desires which, in a deeper sense, are identical with those oft-mentioned "plagues of mankind" said in Kabbalistic Literature to be the offspring of Lilith, but recognized by us as her psychogenic progenitors.

#### NOTES

1. Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Sumerian King List* (Chicago, 1939), 18, n. 37, and 90, n. 131.
2. Bruno Meissner, *Babylonien und Assyrien* (Heidelberg, 1925), ii. 201.
3. Ebeling, *Reallexikon der Assyriology*, ii. 110.
4. Samuel N. Kramer, *Gilgamesh and the Huluppu-Tree* (Chicago, 1939), 1-2. The same story was told in the missing part of Tablet xii of the Babylonian Gilgamesh epic dating from the seventh century B.C.; cf. Alexander Heidel, *The Gilgamesh-Epic and Old Testament Parallels* (Chicago, 1946), 94.
5. Emil G. Kraeling, *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 67 (Oct. 1937), 16-18.
6. Cf. William F. Albright, *Bull. of the Amer. Schools of Oriental Research* 76 (December, 1939), 9.

7. *Isaiah* 34:14.
8. Babylonian Talmud (hereafter: B.) Nidda 24b.
9. B. Erubin 100b.
10. Rashi to B. Sanhedrin 109a.
11. These names, as shown by Moses Gaster, *Studies and Texts*, 1252 ff., are derived from Byzantine magic names such as Sisynios, Synithoros, and the like; cf. also H. A. Winkler, *Salomo und die Karina* (Stuttgart, 1931).
12. Alpha Beta di Ben Sira, ed. Eisenstein, *Otzar Midrashim*, 47; cf. M. Gaster, MGWJ 29 (1880), 553 ff.; *Numbers Rabba* 16.25; *Zohar* i. 34b.
13. B. Erubin 18b; *Genesis Rabba* 20.11, pp. 195-96; 24,6, p. 236; *Tanhuma* Genesis, Buber 20; etc.
14. B. Shabbath 151a.
15. James A. Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur* (Philadelphia, 1913), 77-78, and cf. 75-76 which are paraphrased or summarized above.
16. Montgomery, 155-56, bowl no. 8.
17. *Hosea* 2:5.
18. Jehuda L. Zlotnik, *Ma'ase Yerushalmi* (Jerusalem, 1946), 33.
19. Zlotnik, 66-67.
20. Cf. G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York, 1961), 40ff. In an Arabic incantation text against the Qarina (the Muslim equivalent of Lilith), King Solomon is said to have called his vezir and cousin Asaf ibn Barakhia, in whose name we recognize Joshua ben Perahia, and commanded him to write an amulet, to ward off the demones and all her helpers, cf. Winkler, 18.
21. Gottheil, whose transcript was published by Montgomery, reads *Yahweh Qadmonah Hayin Lilith*. It seems to me, however, that these words should be read *whawah qadmonah hus Lilith*, giving the famous Jewish magical incantation formula as translated above.
22. Montgomery misunderstood this name. In later Jewish magic it has become a commonplace to arrange a formal sale of a child whose life was threatened by an evil spirit, and to call him Mercado, i.e., "The Sold One," if a boy, and Mercada, if a girl.
23. Montgomery, 258 ff. My translation. A very similar incantation is reprinted in as recent a popular remedy-book as Raphael Ohana's *Mar'eh haYeladim*, (Jerusalem, 1908), 61b.
24. Cf. Montgomery, 252-53.
25. Qalqut Reubeni to *Genesis* 2:21, p. 68.
26. *Zohar* iii. 19a, and i. 34b.
27. *Zohar* i. 148a, Sitre Torah.
28. Gershom Sholem, "Kabbaloth R. Ya'aqobh weR. Yitzhaq," *Madda'e haYahaduth* vol. II (Jerusalem 1927), 251, 260.
29. *Genesis* 1:3.
30. *Zohar* i. 19b. with I. Tishby's comments in his *Mishnat Hazohar*, i. 372.
31. B. Sukka 5b.
32. *Zohar* i. 19b.
33. *Zohar* i. 34a.
34. *Zohar* i. 19b.
35. Cf. above, p. 300, where "Lilith Buznai" is mentioned.
36. Midrash Abkir; *Zohar* iii. 76b; Yalqut Reubeni to *Genesis* 4:8, p. 95.
37. R. Naphtali, *Emeq Hamelekh* (Amsterdam, 1648), 179-180a.
38. Cf. Bahya ben Asher ibn Halawa (d.1340), *Commentary to the Pentateuch* (in Hebrew; Venice, 1546), 15d; Manasseh ben Israel (1604-1667), *Nishmat Hayyim* (Amsterdam, 1652), 114b, ch. 12 of the Third Maamar; *Emeq Hamelekh*, 23c-d, chapter 42.
39. *Zohar* i. 19b.
40. *Emeq Hamelekh*, 103a; cf. the Yiddish book *Hanhagath Hassidim we'Anshe Ma'asse* (Frankfurt a.M., 1700), 16a-17a.
41. *Zohar* i. 148a-b, Sitre Torah.
42. *Zohar* i. 148b, Sitre Torah.
43. *Emeq Hamelekh*, Shaar Tiqqune haTeshubhah, ch. 11, p. 19c.
44. Cf. G. Scholem, *Tarbis*, XIX (1948), 175ff.
45. *Zohar* i. 19b. The turn of the flame is reminiscent of the turning of the Cherubim themselves: according to the Talmudic view (B. Baba Bathra 99a) when the Cherubim turned their faces toward each other, this showed that Israel obeyed the will of God; when Israel sinned the Cherubim turned their faces away from each other.
46. *Zohar* iii. 19a.
47. *Zohar* iii. 77a.
48. *Zohar* iii. 77a.
49. *Emeq Hamelekh* 84b.
50. *Meqore Minhagim*, 91f., and Raphael Ohana 50a.

51. *Mar'eh haYeladim* 50b, quoting *Liqqute Gure ha'Ari*; cf. also *Sepher Zekhirah* 53b; Grunwald, *Mitteil. zur jüd. Volkskunde*, viii, 62; similar beliefs and practices among other peoples, cf. Wuttke, *Der deut. Volksaberglaube*, 386; Ploss, *Das Kind*, ii.851; Nyberg, *Kind und Erde*, 222; Robert Graves and Raphael Patai, *Hebrew Myths* (New York, 1964), 10.4.
52. Ohana, 94a.
53. Ohana, 94a-b.
54. Ohana, 94a-b.
55. Cf. *Genesis* 4:19, 22.
56. *Genesis Rabba* 23.3, p. 224, and parallel sources.
57. *Pirqe R. Eliezer* acc. to reading of Nahmanides on *Gen.* 4:2; cf. *Midrash Hagadol* i.118; *Zohar* i. 55a; *Zohar* Ruth 99a, beginning with the words *R. Nehemia patah*; Agadat Bereshit (introd.) 38; Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, I.150; V. 171: Menahem Zioni b. Meir of Speyer (15th century), *Sepher Zioni* (Cremona, 1560), 14b.
58. *Zohar* i. 56a; cf. 19b.
59. *Zohar* iii. 76b.
60. *Zohar* i. 9b.
61. *Zohar* iii. 76b-77a.
62. G. Scholem, *Tarbiš* XIX (1948), 172; cf. also *Midrash Tehillim* 72, Buber, p. 324; *Yalqut Reubeni* to *Genesis* 4:8, p. 95, quoting *Sepher Mishkan ha'Eduth*. The reference to Hadad the Edomite is found in i *Kings* 11:14, 17.
63. Targum Sheni to *Esther* 1:3.
64. Cf. Scholem, *Tarbiš*, XIX (1948), 169.
65. Cf. above, 300.
66. Bahya on *Genesis* (Venice, 1546), 15d; cf. also Isaac Karo, *Toldoth Yitzhak* (Mantua, 1558), to *Genesis*, 16a; *Yalqut Reubeni Reubeni Gadol* (Wilmersdorf, 1681), 53c (Parashat Toldoth); Aharon Shemuel, *Nishmat Hayyim* (Hanau, 1617), 114b (Maamar Gimel, ch. 12).
67. Venice, 1655, 19c.
68. *Psalms* 91:10; *Mar'eh YaYeladim* 10a-b, quoting Mahari Taitazak.
69. *Isaiah* 27:1.
70. Moses Cordovero, *Pardes Rimmonim* (Cracow, 1591), Gate 25, ch. 5, 186d.
71. *Emeq Hamelekh*, 84b, cf. 140b.
72. Cf. e.g. *Emeq Hamelekh*, 140b and Bezalel b. Solomon of Kobrin, 'Amudeha Shiv'ah (Dusseldorf, 1693), 51c-d.
73. *Isaiah* 27:1.
74. *Emeq Hamelekh*, 84c, 103a, 121b, 130a; *Zohar* ii, 108b.
75. *Emeq Hamelekh*, 84a; Scholem, *Tarbiš*, XIX (1948), 173.
76. Cf. *Genesis* 36:39.
77. *Jeremiah* 1:14.
78. R. Isaac Hacoheh, thirteenth century; cf. Scholem, *Tarbiš*, V, 194.
79. Cf. Gershom Scholem, "Kabbaloth R. Ya'aqobh weR. Yitzhaq," *Madda'e haYaHaduth*, II (Jerusalem, 1927), 251, 255, 258, 260-61.
80. Cf. *Genesis* 28:9.
81. Moses Cordovero, *Pardes Rimmonim* (Cracow, 1591), Gate 25, ch. 5, 186d; Gate 26, ch. 8, 188d.
82. Abraham Galante, *Sepher Qol Bokhim* (Venice, 1589), 15, to *Lamentations* 1:5.
83. Cf. above, 299.
84. *Emeq Hamelekh*, 140b.
85. *Genesis* 3:34.
86. Hayyim Vital, *Sepher 'Eš Hayyim* (Koretz, 1784), 129d.
87. *Cant.* 3:8.
88. *Zohar* ii. 163b.
89. Cf. above, 300.
90. *Zohar Hadash Tiqqunim* (Warsaw: Levin-Epstein, no date), 117a top.
91. *Zohar* i. 27b.
92. *Proverbs* 30:23.
93. *Zohar* iii. 69a.
94. Shlomo Alqabes, *B'rith haLevi*, ch. 7, cf. ch. 6.
95. G. Scholem, *Tarbiš*, V, 50, 194-95; I. Tishby, *Mishnat Hazohar*, i. 299.
96. *Zechariah* 9:9.
97. *Zohar* iii. 69a.
98. *Emeq Hamelekh*, 84d.