[Template:About](/wiki/Template:About" \o "Template:About) [thumb|*Lilith* (1892) by](/wiki/File:Lilith_(John_Collier_painting).jpg) [John Collier](/wiki/John_Collier_(Pre-Raphaelite_painter)) in [Southport](/wiki/Southport) Atkinson Art Gallery

**Lilith** ([Template:Lang-he](/wiki/Template:Lang-he) *Lîlîṯ*) is a figure in [Jewish mythology](/wiki/Jewish_mythology), developed earliest in the [Babylonian Talmud](/wiki/Babylonian_Talmud) (3rd to 5th centuries CE). The character is generally thought to derive in part from a historically far earlier class of female [demons](/wiki/Demon) (*līlīṯu*) in [Mesopotamian religion](/wiki/Mesopotamian_religion), found in [cuneiform](/wiki/Cuneiform) texts of [Sumer](/wiki/Sumer), [Akkad](/wiki/Akkadian_Empire), [Assyria](/wiki/Assyria), and [Babylonia](/wiki/Babylonia).

Evidence in later Jewish materials is plentiful, but little information has survived relating to the original [Sumerian](/wiki/Sumer), [Akkadian](/wiki/Akkadian_Empire), [Assyrian](/wiki/Assyria) and [Babylonian](/wiki/Babylonia) view of these demons. While the connection is almost universally agreed upon, recent scholarship has disputed the relevance of two sources previously used to connect the Jewish *lilith* to an Akkadian *lilitu*—the [Gilgamesh](/wiki/Gilgamesh) appendix and the [Arslan Tash amulets](/wiki/Arslan_Tash_amulets).[[1]](#cite_note-1) (See below for discussion of the two problematic sources.[[2]](#cite_note-2))

In Hebrew-language texts, the term *lilith* or *lilit* (translated as "night creatures", "night monster", "night hag", or "screech owl") first occurs in a list of animals in Isaiah 34:11, either in singular or plural form according to variations in the earliest manuscripts. In the [Dead Sea Scrolls'](/wiki/Dead_Sea_Scrolls) [*Songs of the Sage*](/wiki/Songs_of_the_Sage) the term first occurs in a list of monsters. In Jewish [magical](/wiki/Magic_(paranormal)) inscriptions on bowls and amulets from the 6th century BC onwards, Lilith is identified as a female demon and the first visual depictions appear.

In [Jewish folklore](/wiki/Jewish_folklore), from the satirical book [*Alphabet of Ben Sira*](/wiki/Alphabet_of_Ben_Sira) (ca 700–1000 CE) onwards, Lilith appears as [Adam's](/wiki/Adam) first wife, who was created at the same time ([Rosh Hashanah](/wiki/Rosh_Hashanah)) and from the same dirt as Adam – compare Genesis 1:27. (This contrasts with [Eve](/wiki/Eve), who was created from one of Adam's ribs: Genesis 2:22) The legend developed extensively during the [Middle Ages](/wiki/Middle_Ages), in the tradition of [Aggadic midrashim](/wiki/Aggadic_midrashim), the [Zohar](/wiki/Zohar), and [Jewish mysticism](/wiki/Jewish_mysticism).[[3]](#cite_note-3) For example, in the 13th-century writings of Rabbi Isaac ben Jacob ha-Cohen, Lilith left Adam after she refused to become subservient to him and then would not return to the [Garden of Eden](/wiki/Garden_of_Eden) after she had coupled with the [archangel](/wiki/Archangel) [Samael](/wiki/Samael).[[4]](#cite_note-4)The resulting Lilith legend continues to serve as source material in modern [Western culture](/wiki/Western_culture), literature, [occultism](/wiki/Occult), fantasy, and horror.

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## Etymology[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=1)]

The [semitic root](/wiki/Semitic_root) [**L**](/wiki/Lamedh)-[**Y**](/wiki/Yodh)-[**L**](/wiki/Lamedh) served as derivative for the [Hebrew](/wiki/Hebrew) *layil* and [Arabic](/wiki/Arabic) *layl*, meaning "night". The [Talmudic](/wiki/Talmud) and [Yiddish](/wiki/Yiddish) use of *Lilith* cognates with the Hebrew.

In the [Akkadian](/wiki/Akkadian_language) language of [Assyria](/wiki/Assyria) and [Babylonia](/wiki/Babylonia) the terms *lili* and *līlītu* mean spirits. Some uses of *līlītu* are listed in [The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago](/wiki/Chicago_Assyrian_Dictionary) (CAD, 1956, L.190), in [Wolfram von Soden's](/wiki/Wolfram_von_Soden) *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch* ([AHw](/wiki/AHw), p. 553), and [*Reallexikon der Assyriologie*](/wiki/Reallexikon_der_Assyriologie) (RLA, p. 47).[[5]](#cite_note-5) The [Sumerian](/wiki/Sumer) she-demons *lili* have no etymologic relation to [Akkadian](/wiki/Akkadian) *lilu*, "evening."[[6]](#cite_note-6) [Archibald Sayce](/wiki/Archibald_Sayce) (1882)[[7]](#cite_note-7) considered that Hebrew *lilit* (or *lilith*) [Template:Lang-he](/wiki/Template:Lang-he); and the earlier [Akkadian](/wiki/Akkadian_language): *līlītu* are from [proto-Semitic](/wiki/Proto-Semitic_language). [Charles Fossey](/wiki/Charles_Fossey) (1902)[[8]](#cite_note-8) has this literally translating to "female night being/demon," although [cuneiform](/wiki/Cuneiform_script) inscriptions from [Mesopotamia](/wiki/Mesopotamia) exist where *Līlīt* and *Līlītu* refers to disease-bearing wind [spirits](/wiki/Spirit).[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) Another possibility is association not with "night," but with "wind," thus identifying the Akkadian *Lil-itu* as a loan from the [Sumerian](/wiki/Sumerian_language) *lil,* "air" — specifically from [*Ninlil*](/wiki/Ninlil)*,* "lady air," [goddess](/wiki/Goddess) of the [south wind](/wiki/South_wind) (and wife of [Enlil](/wiki/Enlil)) — and *itud,* "moon".[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

## Mesopotamian mythology[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=2)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main)

### The spirit in the tree in the Gilgamesh cycle[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=3)]

[Samuel Noah Kramer](/wiki/Samuel_Noah_Kramer) (1932, published 1938)[[9]](#cite_note-9) translated *ki-sikil-lil-la-ke* as *Lilith* in "Tablet XII" of the [Epic of Gilgamesh](/wiki/Epic_of_Gilgamesh) dated c.600 BC. "Tablet XII" is not part of the Epic of Gilgamesh, but is a later [Assyrian](/wiki/Assyria) [Akkadian](/wiki/Akkadian) translation of the latter part of the [Sumerian](/wiki/Sumerian_language) poem of [Gilgamesh and the Netherworld](/wiki/Gilgamesh_and_the_Netherworld).[[10]](#cite_note-10) The *ki-sikil-lil-la-ke* is associated with a serpent and a [zu bird](/wiki/Zu_(mythology)).[[11]](#cite_note-11) In *Gilgamesh and the Netherworld*, a [huluppu tree](/wiki/Willow) grows in [Inanna's](/wiki/Inanna) garden in [Uruk](/wiki/Uruk), whose wood she plans to use to build a new throne. After ten years of growth, she comes to harvest it and finds a serpent living at its base, a Zu bird raising young in its crown, and that a *ki-sikil-lil-la-ke* made a house in its trunk. Gilgamesh is said to have smitten the snake, and then the zu bird flew away to the mountains with its young, while the *ki-sikil-lil-la-ke* fearfully destroys its house and runs for the forest.[[12]](#cite_note-12)[[13]](#cite_note-13) Identification of *ki-sikil-lil-la-ke* as *Lilith* is stated in [*Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*](/wiki/Dictionary_of_Deities_and_Demons_in_the_Bible) (1999).[[14]](#cite_note-14) According to a new source from Late Antiquity, Lilith appears in a [Mandaic](/wiki/Mandaic_language) magic story where she is considered to represent the branches of a tree with other demonic figures that form other parts of the tree, though this may also include multiple "Liliths".[[15]](#cite_note-15) Suggested translations for the Tablet XII spirit in the tree include *ki-sikil* as "sacred place", *lil* as "spirit", and *lil-la-ke* as "water spirit".[[16]](#cite_note-16) but also simply "owl", given that the *lil* is building a home in the trunk of the tree.[[17]](#cite_note-17) A connection between the Gilgamesh *ki-sikil-lil-la-ke* and the Jewish Lilith was rejected by [Dietrich Opitz](/wiki/Dietrich_Opitz) (1932)[[18]](#cite_note-18) and rejected on textual grounds by Sergio Ribichini (1978).[[19]](#cite_note-19)

### The bird-footed woman in the Burney Relief[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=4)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|](/wiki/File:Burney_Relief_Babylon_-1800-1750.JPG)[Burney Relief](/wiki/Burney_Relief), Babylon (1800–1750 BCE). Some scholars (e.g. [Emil Kraeling](/wiki/Emil_Kraeling)) identified the figure in the relief with Lilith, based on a misreading of an outdated translation of the Epic of Gilgamesh.[[20]](#cite_note-20) Modern research has identified the figure as one of the main goddesses of the Mesopotamian pantheons, most probably [Ishtar](/wiki/Ishtar) or [Ereshkigal](/wiki/Ereshkigal).[[21]](#cite_note-21) Kramer's translation of the Gilgamesh fragment was used by [Henri Frankfort](/wiki/Henri_Frankfort) (1937)[[22]](#cite_note-22) and [Emil Kraeling](/wiki/Emil_Kraeling) (1937)[[23]](#cite_note-23) to support identification of a woman with wings and bird-feet in the [Burney Relief](/wiki/Burney_Relief) as related to Lilith, but this has been rejected by later sources, including the [British Museum](/wiki/British_Museum), which is in current possession of the piece.

### The Arslan Tash amulets[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=5)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) The [Arslan Tash amulets](/wiki/Arslan_Tash_amulets) are limestone plaques discovered in 1933 at [Arslan Tash](/wiki/Arslan_Tash), the authenticity of which is disputed. [William F. Albright](/wiki/William_F._Albright), [Theodor H. Gaster](/wiki/Theodor_H._Gaster),[[24]](#cite_note-24) and others, accepted the amulets as a pre-Jewish source which shows that the name Lilith already existed in the 7th century BC but [Torczyner](/wiki/Naftali_Herz_Tur-Sinai) (1947) identified the amulets as a later Jewish source.[[25]](#cite_note-25)

## In the Bible[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=6)]

The only occurrence is in the [Book of Isaiah](/wiki/Book_of_Isaiah) 34:14, describing the desolation of [Edom](/wiki/Edom), where the Hebrew word *lilit* (or *lilith*) appears in a list of eight unclean animals, some of which may have demonic associations. Since the word *lilit* (or *lilith*) is a [hapax legomenon](/wiki/Hapax_legomenon) in the [Hebrew Bible](/wiki/Hebrew_Bible) and the other seven terms in the list are better documented, the reading of scholars and translators is often guided by a decision about the complete list of eight creatures as a whole.[[26]](#cite_note-26)[[27]](#cite_note-27) Quoting from Isaiah 34 ([NAB](/wiki/New_American_Bible)):

(12) Her nobles shall be no more, nor shall kings be proclaimed there; all her princes are gone. (13) Her castles shall be overgrown with thorns, her fortresses with thistles and briers. She shall become an abode for jackals and a haunt for ostriches. (14) Wildcats shall meet with desert beasts, satyrs shall call to one another; There shall the Lilith repose, and find for herself a place to rest. (15) There the hoot owl shall nest and lay eggs, hatch them out and gather them in her shadow; There shall the kites assemble, none shall be missing its mate. (16) Look in the book of the LORD and read: No one of these shall be lacking, For the mouth of the LORD has ordered it, and His spirit shall gather them there. (17) It is He who casts the lot for them, and with His hands He marks off their shares of her; They shall possess her forever, and dwell there from generation to generation.

### Hebrew text[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=7)]

In the [Masoretic Text](/wiki/Masoretic_Text):

Hebrew: וּפָגְשׁוּ צִיִּים אֶת-אִיִּים, וְשָׂעִיר עַל-רֵעֵהוּ יִקְרָא; אַךְ-שָׁם הִרְגִּיעָה **לִּילִית**, וּמָצְאָה לָהּ מָנוֹח

Hebrew ([ISO 259](/wiki/ISO_259)): [Template:Transl](/wiki/Template:Transl)[[28]](#cite_note-28):34:14 "And shall-meet desert creatures with jackals

the goat he-calls his- fellow

*lilit* (*lilith*) she-rests and she-finds rest[[29]](#cite_note-29):34:15 there she-shall-nest the great-owl, and she-lays-(eggs), and she-hatches, and she-gathers under her-shadow:

hawks[kites, [gledes](/wiki/Gledes) ] also they-gather, every one with its mate.

In the [Dead Sea Scrolls](/wiki/Dead_Sea_Scrolls), among the 19 fragments of [Isaiah](/wiki/Isaiah) found at [Qumran](/wiki/Qumran), the [Great Isaiah Scroll](/wiki/Isaiah_scroll) (1Q1Isa) in 34:14 renders the creature as plural *liliyyot* (or *liliyyoth*).[[30]](#cite_note-30)[[31]](#cite_note-31) [Eberhard Schrader](/wiki/Eberhard_Schrader) (1875)[[32]](#cite_note-32) and [Moritz Abraham Levy](/wiki/Moritz_Abraham_Levy) (1885)[[33]](#cite_note-33) suggest that Lilith was a goddess of the night, known also by the [Jewish exiles in Babylon](/wiki/Babylonian_captivity). Schrader and Levy's view is therefore partly dependent on a later dating of [Deutero-Isaiah](/wiki/Deutero-Isaiah) to the 6th century BC, and the presence of Jews in [Babylon](/wiki/Babylon) which would coincide with the possible references to the [*Template:Transl*](/wiki/Template:Transl) in Babylonian [demonology](/wiki/Demonology). However, this view is challenged by some modern research such as by Judit M. Blair (2009) who considers that the context indicates unclean animals.[[34]](#cite_note-34)

### Greek version[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=8)]

The [Septuagint](/wiki/Septuagint) translates the reference into Greek as [*onokentauros*](/wiki/Onocentaur), apparently for lack of a better word, since also the *se'irim*, "satyrs", earlier in the verse are translated with *daimon onokentauros*. The "wild beasts of the island and the desert" are omitted altogether, and the "crying to his fellow" is also done by the *daimon onokentauros*.[[35]](#cite_note-35)

### Latin Bible[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=9)]

The early 5th-century [Vulgate](/wiki/Vulgate) translated the same word as [*Lamia*](/wiki/Lamia_(mythology)).[[36]](#cite_note-36)[[37]](#cite_note-37)[Template:Quote](/wiki/Template:Quote) The translation is: "And demons shall meet with monsters, and one hairy one shall cry out to another; there the [lamia](/wiki/Lamia_(mythology)) has lain down and found rest for herself...".

### English versions[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=10)]

[Wycliffe's Bible](/wiki/Wycliffe's_Bible) (1395) preserves the Latin rendering *Lamia*:

Isa 34:15 **Lamya** schal ligge there, and foond rest there to hir silf.

The [Bishops' Bible](/wiki/Bishops'_Bible) of [Matthew Parker](/wiki/Matthew_Parker) (1568) from the Latin:

Isa 34:14 there shall the **Lamia** lye and haue her lodgyng.

[Douay-Rheims Bible](/wiki/Douay-Rheims_Bible) (1582/1610) also preserves the Latin rendering *Lamia*:

Isa 34:14 "And demons and monsters shall meet, and the hairy ones shall cry out one to another, there hath the lamia lain down, and found rest for herself."

The [Geneva Bible](/wiki/Geneva_Bible) of [William Whittington](/wiki/William_Whittington) (1587) from the Hebrew:

Isa 34:14 and the **screech owl** shall rest there, and shall finde for her selfe a quiet dwelling.

Then the [King James Version of the Bible](/wiki/King_James_Version_of_the_Bible) (1611):

Isa 34:14 "The wild [beasts](/wiki/Wikt:beast) of the desert shall also meet with the wild beasts of the [island](/wiki/Island), and the [satyr](/wiki/Satyr) shall cry to his fellow; the [**screech owl**](/wiki/Screech_owl) also shall rest there, and find for herself a place of rest."

The "screech owl" translation of the [KJV](/wiki/King_James_Version_of_the_Bible) is, together with the "owl" ([*Template:Transl*](/wiki/Template:Transl), probably a water bird) in 34:11 and the "great owl" ([*Template:Transl*](/wiki/Template:Transl), properly a snake) of 34:15, an attempt to render the passage by choosing suitable animals for difficult-to-translate Hebrew words.

Later translations include:

* night-owl (Young, 1898)
* night-spectre (Rotherham, [Emphasized Bible](/wiki/Emphasized_Bible), 1902)
* night [monster](/wiki/Monster) ([ASV](/wiki/American_Standard_Version), 1901; [JPS](/wiki/Jewish_Publication_Society_of_America_Version) 1917, Good News Translation, 1992; [NASB](/wiki/New_American_Standard_Bible), 1995)
* [vampires](/wiki/Vampire) (Moffatt Translation, 1922; [Knox Bible](/wiki/Knox_Bible), 1950)
* night [hag](/wiki/Hag) ([RSV](/wiki/Revised_Standard_Version), 1947)
* Lilith ([Jerusalem Bible](/wiki/Jerusalem_Bible), 1966)
* lilith ([New American Bible](/wiki/New_American_Bible), 1970)
* Lilith ([NRSV](/wiki/NRSV), 1989)
* Lilith ([The Message (Bible)](/wiki/The_Message_(Bible)), Peterson, 1993)
* night creature ([NIV](/wiki/NIV), 1978; [NKJV](/wiki/NKJV), 1982; [NLT](/wiki/New_Living_Translation), 1996, [TNIV](/wiki/TNIV))
* [nightjar](/wiki/Nightjar) ([New World Translation](/wiki/New_World_Translation), 1984)
* night bird ([English Standard Version](/wiki/English_Standard_Version), 2001)

## Jewish tradition[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=11)]

Major sources in Jewish tradition regarding Lilith in chronological order include:

* c. 40–10BCE [Dead Sea Scrolls](/wiki/Dead_Sea_Scrolls) – Songs for a Sage (4Q510-511)
* c.200 [Mishnah](/wiki/Mishnah) – not mentioned
* c.500 [Gemara](/wiki/Gemara) of the [Talmud](/wiki/Talmud)
* c.800 [The Alphabet of Ben-Sira](/wiki/The_Alphabet_of_Ben-Sira)
* c.900 [Midrash Abkir](/wiki/Midrash_Abkir)
* c.1260 [Treatise on the Left Emanation](/wiki/Treatise_on_the_Left_Emanation), Spain
* c.1280 [Zohar](/wiki/Zohar), Spain.

### Dead Sea Scrolls[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=12)]

The [Dead Sea Scrolls](/wiki/Dead_Sea_Scrolls) contain one indisputable reference to Lilith in *Songs of the Sage* (4Q510-511)[[38]](#cite_note-38) fragment 1:

And I, the Instructor, proclaim His glorious splendour so as to frighten and to te[rrify] all the spirits of the destroying angels, spirits of the [bastards](/wiki/Legitimacy_(law)), demons, Lilith, howlers, and [desert dwellers…] and those which fall upon men without warning to lead them astray from a spirit of understanding and to make their heart and their […] desolate during the present dominion of wickedness and predetermined time of humiliations for the sons of lig[ht], by the guilt of the ages of [those] smitten by iniquity – not for eternal destruction, [bu]t for an era of humiliation for transgression.[[39]](#cite_note-39)

As with the Massoretic Text of Isaiah 34:14, and therefore unlike the plural *liliyyot* (or *liliyyoth*) in the [Isaiah scroll](/wiki/Isaiah_scroll) 34:14, *lilit* in 4Q510 is singular, this liturgical text both cautions against the presence of supernatural malevolence and assumes familiarity with Lilith; distinct from the biblical text, however, this passage does not function under any socio-political agenda, but instead serves in the same capacity as An Exorcism (4Q560) and Songs to Disperse Demons (11Q11).[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) The text is thus, to a community "deeply involved in the realm of demonology",[[40]](#cite_note-40) an exorcism hymn.

Joseph M. Baumgarten (1991) identified the unnamed woman of *The Seductress* (4Q184) as related to female demon.[[41]](#cite_note-41) However, John J. Collins[[42]](#cite_note-42) regards this identification as "intriguing" but that it is "safe to say" that (4Q184) is based on the strange woman of Proverbs 2, 5, 7, 9:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Her house sinks down to death, And her course leads to the shades. All who go to her cannot return And find again the paths of life.     — Proverbs 2:18–19 |  | Her gates are gates of death, and from the entrance of the house She sets out towards Sheol. None of those who enter there will ever return, And all who possess her will descend to the Pit.     — 4Q184 |

### Talmud[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=13)]

Lilith does not occur in the [Mishnah](/wiki/Mishnah). There are three references to Lilith in the [Babylonian Talmud](/wiki/Babylonian_Talmud) in [Gemara](/wiki/Gemara) on three separate Tractates of the Mishnah:

* "Rab Judah citing [Samuel](/wiki/Samuel) ruled: If an abortion had the likeness of Lilith its [mother](/wiki/Mother) is unclean by reason of the [birth](/wiki/Birth), for it is a child but it has wings." ([Babylonian Talmud](/wiki/Babylonian_Talmud) on Tractate Nidda 24b)[[43]](#cite_note-43)\* "[Expounding upon the curses of womanhood] In a [Baraitha](/wiki/Baraitha) it was taught: She grows long hair like Lilith, sits when making water like a beast, and serves as a bolster for her husband.” ([Babylonian Talmud](/wiki/Babylonian_Talmud) on Tractate Eruvin 100b)
* "R. Hanina said: One may not sleep in a house alone [in a lonely house], and whoever sleeps in a house alone is seized by Lilith.” ([Babylonian Talmud](/wiki/Babylonian_Talmud) on Tractate Shabbath 151b)

The above statement by Hanina may be related to the belief that nocturnal emissions engendered the birth of demons:

* "R. Jeremiah b. Eleazar further stated: In all those years [130 years after his expulsion from the Garden of Eden] during which Adam was under the ban he begot [ghosts](/wiki/Ghost) and male demons and female demons [or night demons], for it is said in Scripture: And Adam lived a hundred and thirty years and begot a son in own likeness, after his own image, from which it follows that until that time he did not beget after his own image… When he saw that through him death was ordained as punishment he spent a hundred and thirty years in [fasting](/wiki/Fasting), severed connection with his wife for a hundred and thirty years, and wore clothes of [fig](/wiki/Ficus) on his body for a hundred and thirty years. – That statement [of R. Jeremiah] was made in reference to the [semen](/wiki/Semen) which he emitted accidentally.” (Babylonian Talmud on Tractate Eruvin 18b)

According to [Rabbi Hiyya](/wiki/Hiyya_the_Great) God proceeded to create a second Eve for Adam, after Lilith had to return to dust ([Genesis Rabbah](/wiki/Genesis_Rabbah) 22:7 and 18:4).<ref name=aish-lillith>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref>

### Incantation bowls[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=14)]

An individual Lilith, along with [Bagdana](/wiki/Bagdana_(Judaism)) "king of the lilits", is one of the demons to feature prominently in protective spells in the eighty surviving Jewish occult [incantation bowls](/wiki/Incantation_bowl) from [Sassanid Empire](/wiki/Sassanid_Empire) Babylon (4th–6th Century CE).[[44]](#cite_note-44) These bowls were buried upside down in houses to trap the demon, and almost every Jewish house in [Nippur](/wiki/Nippur) was found to have such protective bowls buried.[[45]](#cite_note-45) One bowl contains the following inscription commissioned from a Jewish occultist to protect a woman called Rashnoi and her husband from Lilith: [Template:Quote](/wiki/Template:Quote)

### Alphabet of Ben Sira[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=15)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) The [pseudepigraphic](/wiki/Pseudepigraphic)[[46]](#cite_note-46) 8th–10th centuries [*Alphabet of Ben Sira*](/wiki/Alphabet_of_Ben_Sira) is considered to be the oldest form of the story of Lilith as Adam's first wife. Whether this particular tradition is older is not known. Scholars tend to date the Alphabet between the 8th and 10th centuries CE. The work has been characterized as [satirical](/wiki/Satire).

In the text an [amulet](/wiki/Amulet) is inscribed with the names of three [angels](/wiki/Angel) ([Senoy](/wiki/Senoy), [Sansenoy](/wiki/Sansenoy), and [Semangelof](/wiki/Semangelof)) and placed around the neck of [newborn](/wiki/Newborn) [boys](/wiki/Boy) in order to protect them from the [lilin](/wiki/Lilin) until their [circumcision](/wiki/Circumcision).[[47]](#cite_note-47) The amulets used against Lilith that were thought to derive from this tradition are, in fact, dated as being much older.[[48]](#cite_note-48) The concept of Eve having a predecessor is not exclusive to the Alphabet, and is not a new concept, as it can be found in [Genesis Rabbah](/wiki/Genesis_Rabbah). However, the idea that Lilith was the predecessor may be exclusive to the Alphabet.

The idea in the text that [Adam](/wiki/Adam) had a wife prior to [Eve](/wiki/Eve) may have developed from an interpretation of the [Book of Genesis](/wiki/Book_of_Genesis) and its dual creation accounts; while Genesis 2:22 describes God's creation of Eve from Adam's rib, an earlier passage, 1:27, already indicates that a woman had been made: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." The Alphabet text places Lilith's creation after God's words in Genesis 2:18 that "it is not good for man to be alone"; in this text God forms Lilith out of the clay from which he made Adam but she and Adam bicker. Lilith claims that since she and Adam were created in the same way they were equal and she refuses to submit to him:[[49]](#cite_note-49)The background and purpose of *The Alphabet of Ben-Sira* is unclear. It is a collection of stories about heroes of the [Bible](/wiki/Bible) and [Talmud](/wiki/Talmud), it may have been a collection of [folk-tales](/wiki/Folklore), a refutation of [Christian](/wiki/Christianity), [Karaite](/wiki/Karaite_Judaism), or other separatist movements; its content seems so offensive to contemporary Jews that it was even suggested that it could be an anti-Jewish [satire](/wiki/Satire),[[50]](#cite_note-50) although, in any case, the text was accepted by the Jewish mystics of medieval Germany.

*The Alphabet of Ben-Sira* is the earliest surviving source of the story, and the conception that Lilith was Adam's first wife became only widely known with the 17th century [*Lexicon Talmudicum*](/wiki/Lexicon_Talmudicum) of German scholar [Johannes Buxtorf](/wiki/Johannes_Buxtorf).

In this folk tradition that arose in the early Middle Ages Lilith, a dominant female demon, became identified with [Asmodeus](/wiki/Asmodeus), King of Demons, as his queen.[[51]](#cite_note-51) Asmodeus was already well known by this time because of the legends about him in the Talmud. Thus, the merging of Lilith and Asmodeus was inevitable.[[52]](#cite_note-52) The second myth of Lilith grew to include legends about another world and by some accounts this other world existed side by side with this one, *Yenne Velt* is Yiddish for this described "Other World". In this case Asmodeus and Lilith were believed to procreate demonic offspring endlessly and spread chaos at every turn.[[53]](#cite_note-53) Many disasters were blamed on both of them, causing wine to turn into vinegar, men to be impotent, women unable to give birth, and it was Lilith who was blamed for the loss of infant life. The presence of Lilith and her cohorts were considered very real at this time.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

Two primary characteristics are seen in these legends about Lilith: Lilith as the incarnation of lust, causing men to be led astray, and Lilith as a child-killing witch, who strangles helpless neonates. These two aspects of the Lilith legend seemed to have evolved separately; there is hardly a tale where she encompasses both roles.[[53]](#cite_note-53) But the aspect of the witch-like role that Lilith plays broadens her archetype of the destructive side of witchcraft. Such stories are commonly found among Jewish folklore.[[53]](#cite_note-53)

### Kabbalah[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=16)]

[Template:Kabbalah](/wiki/Template:Kabbalah) [Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [Kabbalistic mysticism](/wiki/Kabbalah) attempted to establish a more exact relationship between Lilith and the Deity. With her major characteristics having been well-developed by the end of the Talmudic period, after six centuries had elapsed between the [Aramaic](/wiki/Aramaic_language) [incantation](/wiki/Incantation) texts that mention Lilith and the early Spanish Kabbalistic writings in the 13th century, she reappears, and her life history becomes known in greater mythological detail.[[54]](#cite_note-54) Her creation is described in many alternative versions. One mentions her creation as being before Adam's, on the fifth day, because the "living creatures" with whose swarms God filled the waters included none other than Lilith. A similar version, related to the earlier Talmudic passages, recounts how Lilith was fashioned with the same substance as Adam was, shortly before. A third alternative version states that God originally created Adam and Lilith in a manner that the female creature was contained in the male. Lilith's soul was lodged in the depths of the Great Abyss. When God called her, she joined Adam. After Adam's body was created a thousand [souls](/wiki/Soul_(spirit)) from the Left (evil) side attempted to attach themselves to him. However, God drove them off. Adam was left lying as a body without a soul. Then a cloud descended and God commanded the [earth](/wiki/Earth) to produce a living soul. This God [breathed](/wiki/Breath) into Adam, who began to spring to life and his female was attached to his side. God separated the female from Adam's side. The female side was Lilith, whereupon she flew to the Cities of the Sea and attacks [humankind](/wiki/Humankind). Yet another version claims that Lilith emerged as a divine entity that was born spontaneously, either out of the Great Supernal Abyss or out of the power of an aspect of God (the [Gevurah of Din](/wiki/Gevurah)). This aspect of God, one of his ten attributes (Sefirot), at its lowest manifestation has an affinity with the realm of evil and it is out of this that Lilith merged with [Samael](/wiki/Samael).[[55]](#cite_note-55) An alternative story links Lilith with the creation of luminaries. The "first light", which is the light of Mercy (one of the [Sefirot](/wiki/Sefirot)), appeared on the first day of creation when God said "Let there be light". This light became hidden and the Holiness became surrounded by a husk of evil. "A husk (klippa) was created around the [brain](/wiki/Human_brain)" and this husk spread and brought out another husk, which was Lilith.[[56]](#cite_note-56)

#### Midrash ABKIR[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=17)]

The first medieval source to depict Adam and Lilith in full was the [Midrash A.B.K.I.R.](/wiki/Midrash_Abkir) (ca. 10th century), which was followed by the Zohar and Kabbalistic writings. Adam is said to be perfect until he recognizes either his sin or Cain's fratricide that is the cause of bringing death into the world. He then separates from holy Eve, sleeps alone, and fasts for 130 years. During this time Lilith, also known as **Pizna**, desired his beauty and came to him against his will.

### Treatise on the Left Emanation[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=18)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) The mystical writing of two brothers Jacob and Isaac Hacohen, which predates the [Zohar](/wiki/Zohar) by a few decades, states that [Samael](/wiki/Samael) and Lilith are in the shape of an [androgynous](/wiki/Androgynous) being, double-faced, born out of the emanation of the [Throne of Glory](/wiki/Throne_of_Glory) and corresponding in the spiritual realm to Adam and Eve, who were likewise born as a [hermaphrodite](/wiki/Hermaphrodite). The two twin androgynous couples resembled each other and both "were like the image of Above"; that is, that they are reproduced in a visible form of an androgynous deity.

19. In answer to your question concerning Lilith, I shall explain to you the essence of the matter. Concerning this point there is a received tradition from the ancient Sages who made use of the Secret Knowledge of the Lesser Palaces, which is the manipulation of demons and a ladder by which one ascends to the prophetic levels. In this tradition it is made clear that Samael and Lilith were born as one, similar to the form of Adam and Eve who were also born as one, reflecting what is above. This is the account of Lilith which was received by the Sages in the Secret Knowledge of the Palaces.[[57]](#cite_note-57)

Another version[Template:Clarify](/wiki/Template:Clarify) that was also current among Kabbalistic circles in the [Middle Ages](/wiki/Middle_Ages) establishes Lilith as the first of Samael's four wives: Lilith, [Naamah](/wiki/Naamah_(demon)), [Eisheth](/wiki/Eisheth), and [Agrat bat Mahlat](/wiki/Agrat_bat_Mahlat). Each of them are mothers of demons and have their own hosts and unclean spirits in no number.[[58]](#cite_note-58) The marriage of [archangel](/wiki/Archangel) [Samael](/wiki/Samael) and Lilith was arranged by "Blind Dragon", who is the counterpart of "the dragon that is in the sea". Blind Dragon acts as an intermediary between Lilith and Samael:

Blind Dragon rides Lilith the Sinful – may she be extirpated quickly in our days, Amen! – And this Blind Dragon brings about the union between Samael and Lilith. And just as the Dragon that is in the sea (Isa. 27:1) has no eyes, likewise Blind Dragon that is above, in the likeness of a spiritual form, is without eyes, that is to say, without colors.... (Patai81:458) Samael is called the Slant Serpent, and Lilith is called the Tortuous Serpent.[[59]](#cite_note-59)

The marriage of Samael and Lilith is known as the "Angel Satan" or the "Other God", but it was not allowed to last. To prevent Lilith and Samael's demonic children *Lilin* from filling the world, God castrated Samael. In many 17th century Kabbalistic books, this mythologem is based on the identification of "[Leviathan](/wiki/Leviathan) the Slant Serpent and Leviathan the Torturous Serpent" and a reinterpretation of an old Talmudic myth where God castrated the male Leviathan and slew the female Leviathan in order to prevent them from mating and thereby destroying the earth.[[60]](#cite_note-60) After Samael became castrated and Lilith was unable to fornicate with him, she left him to couple with men who experience nocturnal emissions. A 15th or 16th century Kabbalah text states that God has "cooled" the female Leviathan, meaning that he has made Lilith infertile and she is a mere fornication.

The [*Treatise on the Left Emanation*](/wiki/Treatise_on_the_Left_Emanation) says that there are two Liliths, the lesser being married to the great demon [Asmodeus](/wiki/Asmodai).[[61]](#cite_note-61)