



"Every story is informed by a worldview."
—Brian Godawa

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Inventing Goddesses and Demons (Part One)

What if I were to tell you that Adam's first wife was not Eve but a goddess named Lilith? What if I were to mention that the Bible contains a reference to *lilith*?

Who was Lilith? If you were aware of the alternative music scene during the late 1990s, you probably heard of the concert tour and festival called Lilith Fair. It ran for only a few years and fell short of the popularity of Lollapalooza, in part because it consisted mainly of what some at the time called "angry chick music." Lilith Fair was popular among feminists, lesbians, and other women but not so much among card-carrying men.

The founders of Lilith Fair chose the name because of Jewish folklore. Its myth says that Lilith was the first woman, but she refused to submit to Adam in the name of equality. Since [God](#) made both Adam and Lilith from the dust of the ground (the unbiblical tale claims), why should Lilith defer to Adam? Inspired by the legend of this strong, independent woman, the founders of Lilith Fair created an all-female music festival in her honor.

This series will take a brief journey through the murky waters of Jewish folklore and observe how it can parasitically attach itself to the Word of

God. We will also see a deeply disturbing application of the folklore problem defiling God's Word even today.

The legend of Lilith long pre-dates Judaism. According to Janet Howe Gaines in her article "[Lilith](#)" (*Bible Review*), her dark origins lie in Babylonian demonology, first mentioned in an epic poem about Gilgamesh. Her name derives from a class of demons called *lilitu*, usually translated as "night monsters," who were believed to inhabit desolate areas. Lilith is reputed to seduce and otherwise abuse young men and attack pregnant women. Blamed for miscarriages and infant mortality, she was cast as the patron of abortions as her legend grew.

Time passed, and the Babylonian Empire faded, but this night demon's myth spread to other nations that embellished her legend. The Hittites, Egyptians, and Greeks picked up the story, and everywhere Lilith went, she represented chaos, seduction, and ungodliness.

Among the Jews, the Essene community at Qumran was enthralled by demonism. Lilith shows up in some Dead Sea Scrolls, mentioned in a hymn apparently used in exorcisms. Centuries later, Lilith also appears in the Babylonian Talmud, where she is portrayed very much like Babylonian depictions of her. One Talmudic reference even warns that people should not sleep alone at night because Lilith might slay them.

When she was reconceived as the original woman during the Middle Ages, the Lilith story took off. The myth of Lilith became an answer to something that puzzled some scholars: When they compared the Genesis 1 creation of man and woman with the Genesis 2 story of Adam and Eve, they saw more differences than similarities. They perceived that Adam and Eve's story happened much later than the sixth day of creation, so they reasoned that the Genesis 1 account must refer to a different woman since God created Eve from Adam later.

Lilith conveniently came out of the shadows of legend and stepped into the role of the original woman. The scholars answered the later need for Eve by supposing that Lilith felt she was being treated as man's inferior, despite being made at the same time and from the same dust. She claimed her independence by going into the wilderness, and since it was not good for

man to be alone, God created a helper from Adam's side—or so the medieval story goes.

All this folklore is leading to something more pertinent, but we need to add a bit more to the picture. Like comic book and movie superhero tales, the story of Lilith went through different retellings, each adding a bit more to her myth. Lilith received a major retelling in the collection of writings known as the Zohar. Written in the thirteenth century, the Zohar is the seminal work of Kabbalah, which is basically a commentary on the Torah through the lens of mysticism.

The Zohar reinforces Lilith as the first woman, an abuser of men, and a breeder of evil spirits. It provides Lilith with a companion, Samael, the male personification of evil, associated with the serpent, the leader of fallen angels. After cohabiting with Samael, Lilith is punished and turned into a demon goddess. Lilith and Samael ally and embody the dark realm.

These two characters are central figures in Jewish mythology. They are inventions of at least overactive imaginations, if not outright demon influence. Even so, some scholars believe a passage in Isaiah refers to the demon goddess Lilith, and we will examine it in Part Two.

- David C. Grabbe

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Called Their Name Adam](#)

by Mark Schindler

A song sung by Steve Lawrence when lacking the accompaniment of his late wife sounds relatively hollow. God's specific purpose statement in Genesis 1:26 is that He is making mankind in His image. Part and parcel with this purpose was God's creating a partnership between man and wife, one reaching to the God-plane covenant of marriage. In Genesis 5:1 we learn that God named both Adam and Eve Adam—signifying an unbreakable bond between them. This bond was secure until sin entered the scene, creating not

only enmity between mankind and God, but enmity also between man and woman, an animosity existing to this day and one which is in contrast to the joyous union that God originally intended in a marriage relationship. Our carnal nature, saturated by sin, is the architect of divorce as well as enmity toward God and His laws. With the help of God's Holy Spirit, we can mortify the deadly carnal nature within us and restore the joyousness of the God-plane marriage relationship. If the mind of Christ is truly within us, we will not be torn away by the violent war between men and women inspired by Satan, but will demonstrate God's plan—including the joy-filled benefit of marriage—to the world.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[Did God Create a Devil?](#)

by Herbert W. Armstrong

Did God create a Devil? When God created the heaven and the earth, did He create this earth originally in a state of confusion? Here are the answers from God's Word!

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