

**Lilith Study Guide for Initiates and Members
of
Circulos Tenebris Matrem Arcanas
Circle of the Dark and Mysterious Mother**



Lilith

Lilith is one of the most complex figures in spirituality because she has worn so many faces. She has been mentioned and included in many different Traditions and has been called everything from the first wife of Adam, to a demoness, to the Dark Mother God. Her origins are ancient as she is mentioned in both the Sumerian text, Gilgamesh, and the Hebrew Torah & Talmud.

Here is a sample of text from Gilgamesh, mentioning Lilith:

“Years passed, the tree matured and grew big. But Inanna found herself unable to cut down the tree. For at its base the snake 'who knows no charm' had built its nest. In its crown, the Zu-bird -- a mythological creature which at times wrought mischief -- had placed its young. In the middle Lilith, the maid of desolation, had built her house. And so poor Inanna, the light-hearted and ever-joyful maid, shed bitter tears. And as the dawn broke and her brother, the sun-god Utu, arose from his sleeping chamber, she repeated to him tearfully all that had befallen her huluppu-tree.”

Some examples of Lilith in the Torah and Talmud:

“There goat-demons shall greet each other, and there the *lilit* shall find rest.”

“It is forbidden for a man to sleep alone in a house, lest Lilith get hold of him.”

In Jewish Midrash, Lilith is described as Adam’s first wife before Eve. This comes from the fact that there seems to be two creation stories in the book of Genesis.

In Genesis 1:27 it says that God created male and female in the image of God.

“So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”

But in Genesis 2:7 – 2:22 it says that God created Adam and then created Eve from removing a rib from his side.

“Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.”

Genesis 2:22

“Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.”

In the Jewish Midrash, Rabbi’s hypothesized that the first creation was of Adam and Lilith, but when things didn’t work out between them, God created a second woman by taking her from Adam’s side. This was the creation of Eve.

First Feminist

Lilith is often described as the first feminist because she refused to be dominated by Adam. The story goes that Adam wanted to dominate Lilith and force her to be on the bottom during all sexual union. Lilith, knowing that she was an equal to Adam, refuses, calls out the secret name of God and flies out of Eden to the land of Nod (a land described East of Eden where all the creatures of the night dwelled).

Three angels are dispatched to take Lilith back to Eden to submit to Adam. When Lilith refuses, one of the angels threatens to destroy her. Being who she is Lilith laughs and tells the angel that he can’t destroy her because she is integral to creation and if she is destroyed so will everything else outside of God. The angels didn’t expect her to argue, so they leave her to her own devices and return to God empty handed.

When she doesn’t return, God creates Eve by removing part of Adam and fashioning it into a woman. Lilith finds out that she has been replaced and begins to emanate demon babies that are generated from her rage. She also vows to kill the children of Adam. The three angels return and start killing Lilith’s offspring. Eventually Lilith and the angels come to a sort of truce where they allow some of Lilith’s children to live if she only kills those children of Adam that do not accept God and unprotected.

In the midrash Lilith is associated with night and all things dark. The tales of Lilith are many and say that she is the consort of various archdemons as well as the consort of God the Father when his partner (the Matronet) is in exile. There are descriptions in occult literature of how a man can divorce himself from Lilith, so she doesn’t take his seed during the night, and how to protect children from her in the crib. There is even myth that Lilith is the spirit of death that is used during the Egyptian plagues to kill the first born who are not protected by the lamb’s blood over their doors.

In Kabbalistic works Lilith is associated with the Tree of Shadows (the dark Tree of klippot), but she is also associated with Malkut (Kingdom) in the Tree of Life as the Black Bride or Dark Mother. Some modern spiritual Traditions have venerated her as a Goddess while other's have associated her with the demonic and black magic.

Woman, Demon, Or Goddess?

With all of the literature and beliefs about Lilith it's hard to decide where to classify her or what part she actually plays in spirituality. If we look at the original creation story of Lilith from Genesis 1 and the Midrash that describes her flight from Eden, we see a number of interesting things. First, Lilith is created by God to be Adam's partner. Kabbalistically, this means that Lilith was created in the image of God to be a vessel of divine energy that would enter the world and eventually help bring humanity back to conscious unification with God as Ain beyond creation. Second, Lilith seems to know exactly what she is. She calls upon the secret name of God (which being a secret indicates that it is something that only one with a great deal of knowledge would be aware of). When the angels threaten to destroy her, she is aware of her vital role in creation and that their threat was a bluff. Third, she is able to create on her own. This is huge because Adam and Eve do not seem to have that capability until they leave Eden and are forced into physical existence. Something about the experience that she endured, brought realization to her and gave her the ability to be a creator in her own right.

We obviously see that Lilith does turn to darkness between creating demon children and vowing to kill Adam's offspring. In some ways it's hard to blame her. First Adam tries to control her, then she is told by the angels that her creator (God) is willing to destroy her, and then she is replaced. In Jewish lore she is often called the Divorced Woman because she has been cut off from every relationship she has had. Interestingly enough the Midrash also describes her as both the consort of God Most High and the chief demons. She appears to be a being that migrates between extreme darkness and extreme light.

Lilith was created in God's image to be one of the first humans, but she never inhabits a body as Adam and Eve do. She is not a demon because she is not created from klippot and darkness as the other dark beings are. To understand what Lilith truly is, one needs to understand Kabbalah. In Kabbalah there is a concept of Partzufim – personalities of God. These personalities are archetypes and aspects of God that exist as God's light flows down the Tree into creation. They are of varying aspects based on where these personalities emanate (at what place in the Tree). In Lilith's case, she is tied very directly to creation. Creation is a place of duality where both light and darkness exist.

God's presence and power – Shekinah both Mother and Daughter God is the true architect of creation and the aspect of God that exists with us in the physical world to assist and draw us closer to our true selves and our enlightenment. When you understand Shekinah and Partzufim, Lilith obviously stands as an aspect of Shekinah. She is Partzufim as the daughter that was abandoned and left to her own devices, falling into darkness and then having to claw her way up and back to her rightful place. Lilith is the Dark Mother, the Black Bride, and the aspect of all of us that feels alone and hurt. So, in the end, she is absolutely a woman, a demon, and a goddess. She is a being that has done it all and one that understands all of us in our seeming separation.

What's in a Name?

The name Lilith is actually a Hebrew word composed of the letters Lamed, Yod, Lamed, Yod, Tav. In Hebrew the letters all have a meaning, unlike in English where the letters are just sounds. Lamed means ox goad or the force that drives us; Yod represents the Spirit of God; and Tav (the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet) means completion or unification. This points to what Lilith's purpose in creation is. She is that

which drives us to God and ends in our unification. The fact that there is a double Lamed Yod is for emphasis and to show the power of this force. Lilith is the part of us that drives us to want to be loved, to want to be in relationship, and to want to be whole. She is the angry child that doesn't know how else to act because she has never known true love. Eventually in the myth cycle, Lilith finds her way and returns to God, taking her rightful place as Shekinah. We too will eventually remember who we are and that we are truly loved so we can return to ourselves as well.

Quimbanda and Pomba Gira

Quimbanda is a spiritual Tradition from Brazil that mixes African religion, Native Brazilian mysticism, European ritual magic, and Jewish Kabbalah. This may sound like a strange mix of ideas, but it came about as a result of the Portuguese colonization of Brazil. Many people were exiled to Brazil including those that were working with mysticism.

The Catholic Church immediately demonized Quimbanda calling it Satanism. Unlike other African inspired religions (like Santeria) that hid by using Saints to represent their deities, Quimbanda practitioners embraced the church's view and basically said, if you want to think we're worshipping the devil, then we'll worship the devil. They embraced the anti-church sentiment and blatantly used dark and foreboding imagery. In reality, Quimbanda is not Satanism, but instead a rich Tradition that uses communion with spirits to accomplish their work.

At the heart of Quimbanda is the idea of Exu and Pomba Gira. These are male and female spirits that are legion with many personalities, characteristics, and practices. The spirits are combinations of deities and the spirits of dead humans that have embraced the archetype. The Exu are all male while the Pomba Gira are all female. For the purposes of this study guide I will only cover the Pomba Giras because they are in scope for a discussion of Lilith.

Pomba Gira means spiraling or turning dove and relates to the female spirit taking on any aspect she needs depending on the situation. Quimbanda teaches that the mother or source of all Pomba Gira is Lilith. In Jewish Kabbalah it is said that Lilith birthed many demons called Lilin that were of her nature and type. These "demons" were mostly sexual in nature and there to lure men with lust. I believe this is an oversimplification of Lilith's offspring, just as the description of her as a demon is an oversimplification.

The Lilin seem to have lived on in the Tradition of Quimbanda as Pomba Gira. These are female spirits that take up the work of transformation and protection for those that seek them. This is much the same as Lilith, but with very specific personalities and very personal impact on the individual seeking them.

As mentioned before, the Pomba Gira are legion because there are many, many specific entities in the Pomba Gira classification. They are divided into Kingdoms that represents the work they do, such as crossroads, the sea, the cemetery, etc. One very notable Pomba Gira is Pomba Gira Maria Padilha. Maria Padilha was a real person who lived in 14th Century Spain. She was the wife of King Pedro of Castile but was denied so that Pedro could be forced to marry in royalty. Maria died at 27 leaving 4 children behind. She was much loved, but also considered by some to be a witch. She was maligned and mistreated. Maria Padilha is said to have become a Pomba Gira after her death and is venerated in the Tradition to this day. Her life, death, and mistreatment make her a Lilith archetype and can give one a sense of the Pomba Gira and how they can be considered true Lilin (children of Lilith).

Author Veronica Rivas likens the Pompa Gira to Hindu Devi or Buddhist Dakini. These beings are wrathful female spirits that fight demons, affect transformation, and protect those that seek them. I believe this is a beautiful way to represent the Pompa Gira (or Lilin) and also very applicable to Lilith as this is her

nature as well.

Why Lilith?

I've been asked many times why I have such a love for Lilith. My answer is pretty simple. I've found that Lilith is the aspect of God that knows me the best and will force me (sometimes kicking and screaming) to make change. Lilith has known pain and feels for us in our pain, but at the same time she is a force that demands that we stand up and grow through the experience. A relationship with her can be turbulent because she will not stand for excuses or apathy. She will turn your life upside down if need be to get your attention and wake you up. I've had this experience and I wouldn't trade it for the world because she her presence in my life has done more for my spiritual awakening than anything else.

How to Approach Lilith

The first requirement when approaching Lilith is to be ready for change and transformation. If you're not ready to look at your own darkness and deal with it, don't work with Lilith because she will not let you ignore these things if you engage her. The second requirement is be ready to have empathy for others and never put yourself on a pedestal above other beings. She is the spirit of those that have been abandoned and marginalized so she will not stand for any type of racism, sexism, etc. The third requirement is to be consistent with your interactions. She will not be ignored – so if you begin working with her do not ignore her or stop your devotion for any reason.

To honor her I suggest an altar with an image of her. She is highly associated with owls and snakes, so either of those images may be used as well. Pray to her daily, asking her to be merciful, but to show you where you need to grow and how to approach your transformation. Thank her for what she will do and tell her of your love and devotion for her (but a word of caution, don't fake anything or lie because she will not put up with it – be truthful in how you feel). She will accept offerings, but I've found that for her our love and dedication to her is the greatest offering we can give. Once you have built a relationship with her and began to follow your transformation, she will be a great source of strength and fierce protector.