

HEBREW MYTHS: THE BOOK OF GENESIS

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ADAM'S HELPMEEETS

- (a) Having decided to give Adam a helpmeet lest he should be alone of his kind, God put him into a deep sleep, removed one of his ribs, formed it into a woman, and closed up the wound. Adam awoke and said: 'This being shall be named "Woman", because she has been taken *out of man*. A man and a woman shall be one flesh.' The title he gave her was Eve, 'the Mother of all Living.'
- (b) Some say that God created man and woman in His own image on the sixth day, giving them charge over the world, but that Eve did not yet exist. Now, God had set Adam to name every beast, bird and other living thing. When they passed before him in pairs, male and female, Adam – being already like a twenty-year-old man – felt jealous of their loves, and though he tried coupling with each female, in turn, found no satisfaction in the act. He therefore cried: 'Every creature but I has a proper mate, and prayed God would remedy this injustice.'
- (c) God then formed Lilith, the first woman, just as He had formed Adam, except that He used filth and sediment instead of pure dust. From Adam's union with this demoness, and with another like her named Naamah, Tubal Cain's sister, sprang Asmodeus and innumerable demons that still plague mankind. Many generations later, Lilith and Naamah came to Solomon's judgement seat, disguised as harlots of Jerusalem.
- (d) Adam and Lilith never found peace together, for when he wished to lie with her, she took offence at the recumbent posture he demanded. 'Why must I lie beneath you?' she asked, 'I also was made from dust, and am therefore your equal.' Because Adam tried to compel her obedience by force, Lilith, in a rage, uttered the magic name of God, rose into the air and left him.

Adam complained to God; 'I have been deserted by my helpmeet.' God at once sent the angels Senoy, Sansenoy and Semangelof to fetch Lilith back. They found her beside the Red Sea, a region abounding in lascivious demons, to whom she bore *lilim* at the rate of more than one hundred a day. 'Return to Adam without delay' the angels said, 'or we will drown you.' Lilith asked: 'How can I return to Adam and live like an honest housewife, after my stay beside the Red Sea?' 'It will be death to refuse!' they answered, 'How can I die,' Lilith asked again, 'when God has ordered me to take charge of all newborn children: boys up to the eighth day of life, that of circumcision; girls up to the twentieth day. None the less, if ever I see your three names or likenesses displayed in an amulet above a newborn child, I promise to spare it.' To this they agreed; but God punished Lilith by making one hundred of her demon children perish daily; and if she could not destroy

a human infant, because of the angelic amulet, she would spitefully turn against her own.

- (e) Some say that Lilith ruled as queen in Zmargad, and again in Sheba; and was the demoness who destroyed Job's sons. Yet she escaped the curse of death which overtook Adam, since they had parted long before the Fall. Lilith and Naamah not only strangle infants but also seduce dreaming men, any one of whom, sleeping alone, may become their victim.
- (f) Undismayed by his failure to give Adam a suitable helpmeet, God tried again, and let him watch while he built up a woman's anatomy: using bones, tissues, muscles, blood and glandular secretions, then covering the whole with skin and adding tufts of hair in places. The sight caused Adam such disgust that even when this woman, the First Eve, stood there in her full beauty, he felt invincible repugnance. God knew that He had failed once more, and took the first Eve away. Where she went, nobody knows for certain.
- (g) God tried a third time, and acted more circumspectly. Having taken a rib from Adam's side in his sleep, He formed it into a woman; then plaited her hair and adorned her, like a bride, with twenty-four pieces of jewellery, before waking him. Adam was entranced.
- (h) Some say that God created Eve not from Adam's rib, but from a tail ending in a sting which had been part of his body. God cut this off, and the stump - now a useless coccyx - is still carried by Adam's descendants.
- (i) Others say that God's original thought had been to create two human beings, male and female; but instead He designed a single one with a male face looking forward, and a female face looking back. Again, He changed His mind, removed Adam's backward-looking face, and built a woman's body for it.
- (j) Still others hold that Adam was originally created as an androgyne of male and female bodies joined back to back. Since this posture made locomotion difficult, the conversation awkward, God divided the androgyne and gave each half a new rear. These separate beings He placed in Eden, forbidding them to couple.