NOTES

1. The legend of Lilith— the primeval temptress— was already referred to by the prophet Isaiah in his enumeration of the spirits and beasts of prey that would lay waste the lands of those who waged war on Israel: ‘‘And the wild cats shall meet with the jackals, and the satyr shall call to his neighbor…and the night monster (*Lilith*) shall repose there’’ (34:14). There are many references to her in Babylonian demonology, as well as in Talmud, Midrash and Kabbalistic literature. The Talmud (Eiruv.18b), for example, commenting on the verse, ‘‘After Adam lived one hundred and thirty years he begot after his own image and likeness’’(Gen. 5:9), states that, ‘from here we may infer that before he reached that age— and while he was under divine censure— he did not produce offspring who were “after his own image and likeness,” but rather, spirits, shades and *Liliths.*’

In another Talmudic passage (Shabb.151b), young men are warned not to sleep in a house alone, lest they be seduced by Lilith. Women in childbirth and newly-born babes were also considered to be in danger from her spells, and several medieval works enumerate those dangers and describe measures that might be taken in order to neutralize the effects of her violence.

In some medieval Midrashic traditions, Lilith is depicted as having been the consort of Adam after he separated from Eve following their sin. In other myths, she is his first wife— the first Eve— created from the earth at the same time as Adam. We have placed her in the context of the first of these traditions and depicted her as attempting— with the aid of the Serpent that she created by means of her occult arts— to remove Eve from the scene in order to make Adam her own.

The notion of her having created the Serpent was inspired by the widespread belief that Lilith could transform herself or others into any shape or form. Varieties of those Lilith forms are portrayed in primitive art work on Aramaic Incantation Bowls dating back to the 5th cent. BCE. *Rashi* (on Exod. 4:24) quotes the Mid. Shem. Rab. 5 [8] to the effect that the angel who sought to kill Moses and Zipporah’s son because he was not circumcised (See Ex. 4:24-25) indirectly indicated to Zipporah the precise cause of the divine displeasure by transforming himself into a serpent. The reptile first wrapped its mouth around the child’s head up unto its thigh, and then did the same from the legs up, as far as its genitals, thereby drawing direct attention to the part of the body that required ritual attention.

As myths were handed down orally, it was inevitable that individual elements within the stories would be changed, interchanged or distorted. Hence the Talmud depicts the Serpent as saying, ‘I shall kill Adam and marry Eve’ (Tal. Sota 9b). I have utilized several of the ingredients of the above Midrashic and legendary sources to create my own version of events, wherein it is Lilith who desires to marry Adam, and who creates the Serpent to aid her efforts.

The name Lilith is a variety of the Hebrew word *layla*, meaning ‘night’. Spirits were believed to be creatures of the night, performing their demonic arts and striking their foes in the darkness, the element wherein they thrived. It should not be forgotten that already in the Bible, Esau’s shadowy adversary— according to rabbinic tradition, his counterpart in the world of the spirits (*Saro shel Esav*)— begged Jacob to allow him to return to his place,

‘‘since day has already dawned’’ (Gen. 32:27). See our note on 125-4:1 – 5:4.

EATING OF THE FORBIDDEN FRUIT

2. *Without so much as the slightest touch*: God’s original command to Adam was exclusively that he desist from eating the fruit of the forbidden tree, with no hint of any prohibition against touching it (See Gen. 2:17). According to Midrashic tradition, Eve, by extending the prohibition in this way (See Gen.3:3), enabled the Serpent to prove to her that just as she was in error on that score, so was she in error regarding any divine punishment for the eating of it.

3. *So if, in touching, all was well:* See previous note.

4. *Which was truly nice:* See Gen. 3:6.

5. *And at his response of sheer bliss:* It is curious that Adam puts up no resistance to Eve’s request that he eat of the forbidden fruit. Our reading of Gen. 3:6 brings out the force of the word *immah*, ‘‘together with her,’’ in the phrase ‘‘She gave also to her husband [who was] together with her (*immah*), that he ate.’’ We regard that word as connoting a feeling of passion which rendered Adam insensitive to the full implication of his act.

6. *Whose shame they’d never hitherto known:* See Gen. 2: 25.

7. *She desired the pleasures fleeting:* See Gen. 3:12.

8. *A victim of the serpent’s ruse:* See Gen. 3:13.

9. *I’ve brought you fig leaves:* See Gen. 3:21.

10. *What have you done now?* See Gen. 3:14.

11. *To live in peace with the man I’d made:* The implication of the biblical text is that, before this ‘enmity’ (See Gen. 3:15) was imposed, man and serpent lived in a state of peaceful co-existence.

12. *Now, through your act, Eve has sinned:* A curious Talmudic tradition has it that the serpent raped Eve and ‘injected into her a (moral) poison whose effect, as far as Israel was concerned, was only neutralized through the divine revelation at Sinai (See Tal. Av. Zar. 22b).

13. *In clearing, weeding, pruning – and pain:* See Gen. 3:17.

14. *As thorns and thistles tear at his skin:* See Gen. 3:18.

15. *Those he’ll name Seth, Cain and Abel:* See Gen. 4:1, 2, 25.

16. *Your pain will be great when you give birth:* See Gen. 3:16.

17. *He'll be the one to give the commands: Ibid.*

18. *He'll strike your head, and you'll bite his toe:* See Gen. 3:15. The Midrash (See *Yal. Shim.* 3 (29)) states that God's original purpose was to grant to the serpent the status of king of all the animals, to have it walk erect, and to enable it to enjoy human food. His rebellion against God, however, was punished measure for measure: He was hitherto to become the most accursed of all beasts; he was to walk on his belly and consigned to eat dust throughout his life (See Gen. 3:14).

19. *Wielding a sword constantly turning:* See Gen. 3:24.

20. *And shall have to provide for his own needs:* See Gen. 3:19.

CAIN AND ABEL

21. *Twin sisters were born with Abel and Cain:* The Midrash, perhaps attempting to explain how Adam and Eve's sons managed to procreate, asserts that twin sisters were born together with them, and that, in an age before incest was prohibited, were designated to be their respective wives. But that tradition gets even more bizarre when it states that an extra twin sister was born with Abel. That sister became the subject of a furious dispute between the brothers, with Cain asserting his right to her as the firstborn son, and consequently entitled to a double portion of any family inheritance (See Deut. 21:17). Abel countered by arguing that the fact that she was born together with him proves that she was his intended (This wife/sister tradition has its roots in ancient Babylonian family law, and is employed by some commentators to add a measure of moral justification to Abraham's having passed off his wife, Sarah, to both the Egyptians (See Gen. 12:13) and to the Philistine king, Abimelech (See Gen. 20:2), as his sister. In ancient Near Eastern mythology, the goddess Anath was also both the sister and wife of Baal.).

22. *The fattest lambs…devotedly procured:* See Gen.4:4.

23. *From now you are exiled:* See Gen. 4:12.

24. *The sister whom he chose:* The Bible refers to Adam and Eve begetting sons and daughters (See Gen. 5:4). An ancient tradition, preserved in the post-Biblical book of Jubilees, has it that they had a total of nine other children, among whom were two daughters, Awan and Azura, whom Cain and Seth, respectively, married. That source makes no reference, however, to the name of Abel's sister-wife, assuming, perhaps, that he was killed by Cain before he had the opportunity to marry her. Midrashic tradition, as we have observed, credits Abel with having married twin sister-wives. (See Ber. Rabb. 22 (3) and *Rashi* on Gen. 4:2).

Our speculation that Cain's murder of his brother was motivated by his desire for Abel's wife, and that God's selection of Abel's sacrifice and rejection of Cain's was a secondary source of conflict— perhaps 'the last straw that broke the camel's back'— derives directly from that Midrashic sister-wife conflict situation.

25. *And smashed it over Abel's head:* Midrashic tradition has it that the murder weapon was

a stone (See Ber. Rabb. 22 (18).

26. *But the ground…will no longer yield its crop:* See Gen. 4:12.

27. *I'll place a sign between your eyes…* See Gen. 4:15.

28. *Seven-fold shall their punishment be: Ibid.*