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THE LILITH LEGEND.

AMONG the magical texts in the Museum is the following, which belongs to a widespread category of Jewish charms:

Shaddai

Sanui Sansanui Semnigraph Adam YHWH Kadmon Life Lilith.

In the name of Y" the God of Israel who besits the cherubs, whose name is living and enduring forever. Elija the prophet was walking in the road and he met the wicked Lilith and all her band. He said to her, Where art thou going, Foul one and Spirit of foulness, with all thy foul band walking along? And she answered and said to him: My lord Elija, I am going to the house of the woman in childbirth who is in pangs (?), of So-and-so daughter of Such-a-one, to give her the sleep of death and to take the child she is bearing, to suck his blood and to suck the marrow of his bones and to devour his flesh. And said Elija the prophet—blessed his name!—With a ban from the Name—bless it!—shalt thou be restrained and like

a stone shalt thou be! And she answered and said to him: For the sake of Y" postpone the ban and I will flee, and will swear to thee in the name of Y" God of Israel that I will let go this business in the case of this woman in childbirth and the child to be born to her and every inmate so as do no injury. And every time that they repeat or I see my names written, it will not be in the power of me or of all my band to do evil or harm. And these are my names: Lilith, Abitar (Abito?), Abikar (Abiko?), Amorpho, Hakaš, Odam, Kephido, Ailo, Matrota, Abnukta, Šatriha, Kali, Batzeh, Talui, Kitša. And Elija answered and said to her: Lo, I adjure thee and all thy band, in the name of Y" God of Israel, by gematria 613, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and in the name of his holy Shekina, and in the name of the ten holy Seraphs, the Wheels and the holy Beasts and the Ten Books of the Law, and by the might of the God of Hosts, blessed is he!—that thou come not, thou nor thy band to injure this woman or the child she is bearing, nor to drink his blood nor to suck the marrow of his bones nor to devour his flesh, nor to touch them neither in their 256 limbs nor in their 365 ligaments and veins, even as she is (= thou art?) not able to count the number of the stars of heaven nor to dry up the water of the sea. In the name of: 'Hasdiel Šamriel has rent Satan.'

Such charms as these are still hung up in Jewish households, with the special intention of warding off the demon who lies in wait with hateful jealousy to destroy the born or unborn child and to injure its mother. This form of incantation is typical of many of the characteristic elements of magic as found throughout the ages. The Lilith is one of the hoariest conceptions of the superstitious imagination. She goes back to the early Babylonian magic, and bears a Sumerian name; she appears in the Old Testament (Isaiah 34, 14) as a desert-haunting demon; a vast amount of Jewish lore developed about her, making her the first wife of Adam (or his wife after the Fall), from which union sprang a host of demons. She early came to be regarded as the demon jealous of the love of the sexes, and her peculiar penchant is the frustration of their natural union, so that women and children are the special objects of her malignity. Psychologically she is the product of the neurotic pathology of the female sex.

The form of the incantation is also instructive. It reads in the style of a narrative, the story being told how the Lilith once met the Prophet Elijah and was worsted by his exorcism. This

legendary form of incantation is a form of sympathetic magic; the mere telling of the story reproduces the identical result over again. Thus in the old Babylonian magic the pest-god Dibbarra could be thwarted by repeating the myth of his defeat at the hand of the good gods. In fact any narrative about a demon had virtue, as exhibiting the power of knowledge over him.

But the potency of the charm lies peculiarly in the recitation of the Lilith's names. In a parallel charm it is prescribed that the list of her names be hung up in the bedchamber and they avail to avert the demon. This name-magic is the extreme exemplification of the idea of the power of magical knowledge. To know the name of god or demon in ancient magic and religion endowed the possessor of the mystery with influence over the supernatural being. A classical instance of this is found in the legend in Genesis 32, 22f, where Jacob demands the name of the god who wrestled with him and the latter refuses to give it.

But apart from these elements this magical legend has great interest on account of its appearance in widely different languages and literatures, and because it itself bears the traces of eclectic origin, having picked up in its journey through the ages elements from very diverse quarters. An interesting chapter on the history of the legend has been given by Dr. M. Gaster in *Folklore*, xi (whole number xlvi), 129, entitled "Two Thousand Years of Charm Against the Child-Stealing Witch." He draws from a large stock of Slavonic, Rumanian, modern Greek and Syriac literature, to which I can also add some earlier examples from the Greek and from Italy. The Lilith of the Orient becomes identified with the witch of the Occident, who is always a half uncanny creature in the older magic, although rationalized later into a woman possessed by a demon.

A comparison of the different forms of the legend scattered over this wide area shows that they proceed from the same melting pot of the magic of the old Mediterranean world, in which the elements are so fused that it is difficult to work out a genealogy of the magic. The East and the West borrowed from, and gave to, each other mutually. Thus the opening words of our charm, which are Jewish, Sanui, Sansanui produced a Saint Sisoe or Sisynios, who is a great help against the demons in the Byzantine and Balkan world. Also the several different forms of the legend correspond to a large extent in the names given to the Lilith or Witch. To give some examples, the first name in our charm, Lilith

has as its parallel in Greek forms *Gelou*, in the Syriac *Geos*, which two words are descended from the ancient Babylonian demon name, the *Gallu*. *Abixa* is found as *Abiza* or *Abuzou* in the Greek, and *Avezuba* in the Rumanian. The fourth name *Amorphos* is actually a Greek word, "shapeless," and of more correct form than the *Morphos* which appears in the Greek texts. The name *Kali* is represented in translation in the Greek of *Phlegumon* ("burning"), etc. The persistence and interchange of these names are interesting and instructive phenomena.

Also the Prophet *Elijah* has his appropriate counterparts in the other legends. In the Christian legends this may be the Virgin *Mary*, *St. Michael*, or even *Christ* himself; or some less eminent saint, the *St. Sisoe* whose origin has been indicated above, or one of the numerous obscure Syriac saints, *e. g.* *Mar Ebedishu*. A document like this carries us back through the ages and religions, Slavonic, Greek, Italian, Syriac, Hebrew—Christian, Pagan, Jewish—to most primitive elements of the Babylonian magic. The same form of charm is found in Christian books, on Greek manuscripts, on the bowls from *Nippur*, and still hangs in the bedchamber of Jewish women.

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