

## SUPPLEMENT

### שלום זכור

While searching for the historical circumstances that prevailed during the lifetime of the Maharil, I came across a discussion of another custom the initiation of which is difficult to trace; i.e. שלום זכור. Like the custom of תשליך, the custom of שלום זכור is ostensibly based on a פסוק:

ירמיהו פרק כ' פסוק טו'—ארור האיש אשר בשר את אבי לאמר ילד לך בן זכר, שמחה שמחה.

*Translation: Cursed be the man who brought news to my father, saying, A son has been born to you; making him very glad.*

When the verse is cited, it is cited beginning with only the words: ילד לך בן זכר, שמחה שמחה.

I present three excerpts from the book: *The Lifetime of a Jew throughout the Ages of Jewish History*, By Hayyim Schauss, Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1950, in which he discusses the custom of שלום זכור:

*pages 41-43*

A B'ris in Worms . . . We proceed to another Jewish community in the Rhineland. It is the ghetto of Worms in the seventeenth century, two hundred years after the time of Maharil. We are again fortunate in having a rich source upon which to draw. It is a book about the customs of the Jews of Worms written by Juspa Shamosh, the secretary of the community and the shamos (sexton) of the synagogue at Worms. In some respects Juspa Shamosh is even superior as a writer to R. Zalmon, as he depicts life in general, the folkways of the people, as well as the hustle and bustle preceding and following religious ceremonies.

There were several mohalim in Worms, and as soon as a woman gave birth to a boy, one mohel after another paid a visit to the parents, offering his services. The wives of the mohalim also visited the mother, in order to have this honor accorded to their husbands. As they were not remunerated for their services, they competed for the privilege of performing a mitsvo.

On the Friday night following the birth of a boy, relatives and friends visited the parents, and were served with fruit and wine. This celebration was called ben zochor (a male child, a phrase from Jer. 20:15).

Three days before the b'ris, the beadle of the synagogue would stride through the streets of the ghetto, crying aloud: "Zu der yiddish kertz!" (to the circumcision candle, "kertz" for candle and "yiddish" for Yiddishen, i.e., to Judaize by circumcision). Thereupon the women gathered at the house of the parents to make the one large and the twelve small candles which were to burn in the synagogue at the b'ris.

During the days immediately before the b'ris, women friends visited the mother. They helped her bathe the child and before departing they left coins for the woman who took care of the mother during her childbed.

The b'ris took place at the synagogue if the weather permitted. The sandek's wife, accompanied by the most eminent women of the community, brought the child into the women's section of the synagogue. There was a special door there, made for the occasion of a b'ris. It was called "Yiddish Tir" (circumcision door). At the threshold of this door the sandek's wife delivered the child to her husband. After the b'ris the father invited all the people who witnessed the ceremony to partake of a festive meal at his house. On this occasion z'miros (table songs) were sung and a discourse on Torah was delivered. The wine for the meal was provided by the sandek.

On the third day following the b'ris, when the child could again be bathed, there was a little celebration in the home. It was a kind of a sequel to the b'ris, and in this the mother, too, participated.

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The first celebration of the birth of a boy takes place on the following Friday night. It is called ben zochor (see p. 42). At the synagogue the sexton stands on the bimo and, in behalf of the new father, invites the people to the ben zochor. After the Friday night meal, relatives and friends gather in the house to offer Mazol Tov (good luck) to the parents. The guests are treated to cider, beer, apples, cooked beans and peas. Among the visitors is also the chazan, who leads in the singing of z'miros.

There is another celebration on the next day, after the morning services. Relatives and friends again gather in the home of the parents to visit the new-born boy. B'rocho (benediction) is recited over wine and brandy, and various delicacies are served. This celebration is called sholom zochor (peace of the male child, an allusion to the Talmud which says that with the birth of a male child peace comes to the world<sup>1</sup>).

1. תלמוד בבלי מסכת נדה דף לא' עמ' ב'—ואמר רבי יצחק אמר רבי אממי: כיון שבא זכר בעולם – בא שלום בעולם, שנאמר (ישעיהו מ"ז, א') שלחו בר מושל ארץ; זכר – זה בר.

Translation: R. Isaac citing R. Ammi further stated: As soon as a male comes into the world peace comes into the world, for it is said, Send ye a gift for the ruler of the land and the Hebrew for male is composed of the consonants of the 'words for 'this is a gift'.

Charms against Lilith . . . The fear of Lilith and her demoniac troop was very old among Jews, but the application of inscribed amulets as a protection against Lilith appeared later. In general, written amulets represent a later development than oral conjurations. First the words were uttered, and later these words were written down. First the conjuror orally narrated the story of the encounter between the three dreaded angels and Lilith, or between the prophet Elijah and Lilith, and it was believed that this spoken account drove away the evil spirits. Later, the spoken recital was put into writing, and became an amulet. People evidently considered the written amulet just as effective as the spoken words of the conjuror. Authoritative knowledge of the use of written amulets against Lilith goes back only as far as post-Talmudic times. But we may assume that oral conjurations against demoniac powers in the room of a woman in childbed were employed in much earlier times.

The amulet was not the only safeguard employed against Lilith. There were many more, e.g., the magic circle and the shutting of the windows which have already been described. Two more of these safeguards need special explanations. On the eve of the b'ris, the mohel's knife was placed under the mother's head-pillow. Among many peoples, iron was a popular and wide-spread safeguard against demons. The belief in demons stems from the Stone Age, which explains why the new metal was hateful to them, and kept them out. At the celebration of the ben zochor on the Friday night preceding the b'ris and also on the Watch Night, cooked beans and peas were eaten. Legumes were considered by Jews as well as by many other peoples as a sort of an offering to appease the demons.

The source for the name Lilith is the following verse:

ישעיהו פרק לד', יד' – ופגשו ציים את איים ושעיר על רעהו יקרא אך שם הרגיעה לילית ומצאה לה מנוח.

*Translation: The wild beasts of the desert shall also meet with the jackals; the scops owl shall cry to his fellow; the tawny owl also shall rest there, and find for herself a place of rest.*

The Talmud records concern for the demon, Lilith:

תלמוד בבלי מסכת שבת דף קנא' עמ' ב' – אמר רבי חנינא: אסור לישן בבית יחידי, וכל הישן בבית יחידי אחזתו לילית.

*Translation: R. Hanina said: One may not sleep in a house alone, and whoever sleeps in a house alone is seized by Lilith (the night demon).*

The following is a late Midrash which describes the emergence of the demon, Lilith:

אוצר המדרשים (אייזנשטיין) אלפא ביתא דבן סירא עמוד 74 – כשברא הקדוש ברוך הוא אדם הראשון יחיד, אמר לא טוב היות האדם לבדו, ברא לו אשה מן האדמה כמוהו וקראה

לילית, מיד התחילו מתגריין זה בזה, אמרה היא איני שוכבת למטה, והוא אומר איני שוכב למטה אלא למעלה שאת ראויה למטה ואני למעלה, אמרה לו שנינו שויין לפי ששנינו מאדמה, ולא היו שומעין זה לזה, כיון שראתה לילית אמרה שם המפורש ופרחה באויר העולם, עמד אדם בתפלה לפני קונו ואמר, רבש"ע אשה שנתת לי ברחא ממני, מיד שגר הקדוש ברוך הוא שלשה מלאכים הללו אחריה להחזירה, אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא אם תרצה לחזור מוטב, ואם לאו תקבל על עצמה שימותו מבניה בכל יום מאה בנים, עזבו אותה והלכו אחריה והשיגוה בתוך הים במים עזים שעתידין המצריים לטבוע בו וספרוה דבר ה' ולא רצתה לחזור, אמרו לה אנו נטביעך בים, אמרה להם הניחוני שלא נבראתי אלא להחליש התינוקות כשהן משמונה ימים מיום שילד אשלוט בו אם הוא זכר, ואם נקבה מיום ילדותה עד עשרים יום. וכששמעו דבריה הפצירו לקחתה, נשבעת להם בשם א-ל חי וקיים שכל זמן שאני רואה אתכם או שמכם או תבניתכם בקמיע לא אשלוט באותו התינוק, וקבלה על עצמה שימותו מבניה מאה בכל יום, לפיכך בכל יום מתים מאה מן השדים, ולכך אנו כותבים שמותם בקמיע של נערים קטנים ורואה אותם וזוכרת השבועה ומתרפא הילד.

*Translation: After G-d created Adam, alone, G-d recognized that it was not healthy for Adam to be alone. G-d then created a woman from the earth like Adam and named her Lilith. Immediately, the two began to bicker. She insisted on not sleeping below and he insisted that he not sleep below because he thought it more appropriate that she sleep below. She answered him: we are both equal since we were both created from dirt. They simply could not agree on anything. Recognizing their differences, Lilith uttered G-d's Ineffable Name and flew away. Adam then stood in prayer and informed G-d that the woman G-d had created for him had left him. G-d then enlisted three angels to find Lilith. G-d said to Adam: if Lilith comes back, fine; but if she refuses, I will see to it that 100 of her children die each day. The angels found Lilith hiding in the waters that were destined to bury the Egyptians. They related to her what G-d had said, but she refused to return to Adam. They said to her: we will bury you here at sea. Lilith asked that they leave her be. "I was created to weaken new born boys from the day of their birth to the day of their circumcision and to govern over them and over new born girls during the first twenty days of their lives." When the angels heard what she planned to do they became angry with her. She then swore in G-d's name that if in the future, she sees the angels or their names or an image of them in an amulet, she would not harm the new born child while accepting that each day, 100 of her new born children (demons) would die. That is why 100 demons die each day. That is also why we prepare amulets in which we imprint the angels' names and leave the amulets with new born children. When Lilith sees the amulets, she remembers her oath and the child heals.*