

# Demon

Detail from [\*Death and the Miser\*](#), a painting by [Hieronymus Bosch](#), in the [National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.](#)

A **demon** (or **daemon**, **daimon**, [Greek](#): δαίμονας, i.e. evil spirit), also known as an **angel of darkness** or a **dark angel**, is a [supernatural malevolent](#) being in many world [religions](#). The word 'demon' has different meanings all over the world, but often there is the idea that they are spirits that lived in a place, or went with a person. The word is also used for a type of computer program that does useful things in the background of a computer, but this use is not related to the religious meaning.

## In religion, folklore, and mythology

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A demon is usually thought to be a supernatural creature that is an [evil spirit](#). Demons are often described as being summoned by someone, and then either being sent to do works of evil, or to create chaos. "To demonize" means to make someone appear evil.

In a few writings, there are also good demons, for example in stories by [James Clerk Maxwell](#), [Hesiod](#) and [Shakespeare](#).<sup>[[source?](#)]</sup> In Indo-European [mythology](#) and [traditions](#) of Iranian Avestan and Vedic, the idea of "demons" was there for many years. [Ancient Egyptians](#) thought of demons as "[monsters](#)" that ate [souls](#) of people when they went to the [afterlife](#). In ancient [Greek mythology](#), there are also *daemons* but they were thought to be invisible protectors that they believed protected them. In the book [Northern Lights](#) by [Philip Pullman](#), a daemon is said to be a creature that everyone has as part of the body. So if it is far away from someone, that person would feel hurt.

"Monotheistic" religions (that say there is one God) usually teach that demons are rebels and under God at all times. The English poet [John Milton](#) describes Satan as rebelling against God but losing, and being allowed to survive only by God's grace. In some "polytheistic" religions, demons are equal to gods. In Hinduism, the demon-goddess Kali represents destruction and thus from a human standpoint is "bad".

## Western belief

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The *grimoire* ([medieval](#) book about [magical](#) beliefs) called *Ars Goetia*, writes about 72 demons that a king has called and put in a [bronze](#) container sealed by magical [symbols](#). The demons had to do whatever the king said. This

book is all about [spirits](#) and demons, good and evil, that were called by magic.

In Western thought, demons are spirits who do evil things. They are not similar to humans. Rather they are like angels, but doing harm. Pagan gods, like the [Norse Gods](#) are often thought to be demons in reality.

[Christians](#) believe that demons were [angels](#) that went bad. They fought against God, who won the battle with Michael (see [Book of Revelation](#) chapter 12) God sent the bad demons into a prison called [Hell](#) and they could not see God now for the [punishment](#). Those demons are called the [fallen angels](#).

Western beliefs about demons come from the [Bible](#). The Bible does not mention the origin of demons. The idea that demons are fallen angels comes mostly from [Augustine of Hippo](#).

## Middle Eastern belief

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Ali, an important person for Sunni and Shia Muslims, portrayed while he fights against demons (divs).

In Middle Eastern beliefs, demons are often thought to have lived before humans, and they are often similar to humans. When humans appeared, the demons vanished under the earth or hide into dark and desolate places. In [Turkey](#), [Armenia](#), [Iran](#) and [Albania](#) they are called *div*. In [Syria](#), [Arabian Peninsula](#), and [Egypt](#), they are called *ifrit* or *marid*. In [Islamic](#) cultures, there are also [djinn](#), who are similar to demons, but not necessarily evil.

The notion of demons derive from [Zoroastrianism](#), an ancient Iranian religion. They called the demons *deva*. Zoroastrians believed that the Hindu deities (deva) were evil and caused [injustice](#) among humans. Therefore, they believed the deva are evil. Jews back when believed these deva were real, but the demons of their own religion.

In the [Greek New Testament](#) and [Hebrew Old Testament](#), demons are said to be bad. In Hebrew, demons are called *se'irim*. In other Hebrew writings, they do not come from [heaven](#), but came from another world and made much troubles. They gave [diseases](#) too. And they have a prince who is not God, but a demon. Sometimes this prince is thought to be [Samael](#).

The *deva* were called *div* by Muslims. Unlike the djinns, div were not created to choose and have no free-will. Muslim scholars could only speculate about their origin. Some think they have been created by God, even before the djinns, others thought they are created a company for [Satan](#).<sup>[1]</sup>

In [Islam](#), *djinns* are creatures that cannot be seen by people most of the time, made of fire by God (Allah), with special powers to help and harm people. *Djinns*, like humans, have free will and must choose to serve and

obey God (Allah). Like demons, djinns can possess people, but they are not only evil.

## Eastern Belief

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In [Hinduism](#), demons are called *asuras*. *Patala* is thought to be an underground place below the Earth, where humans live. *Asura* means [supernatural](#) beings that were good or bad. People who do evil and horrible things in their lives, by [reincarnation](#), will turn into evil, ghost [spirits](#) called *Vetalas*, *Pisand hachas*, *Bhūtas*. The most evil people reincarnate in hell as demons. In Japanese folklore, there are malevolent spirits called *oni* (  ), a [Japanese](#) word translatable as "demon" in English.

## Native American Belief

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In the [traditional religion](#) and [folklore](#) from the [Native Americans](#) in the United States and the [Canada's First Nations](#), the [Wendigo](#), a mythological [monster](#) believed to have a grotesque appearance and only [eat](#) human flesh, is widely considered to be a demon.

## Age and *InuYasha*

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In *InuYasha*, a [fictional manga](#), [yokai](#) ([Japanese](#) for supernatural creatures and [translated](#) demon in English) cannot die easily and they age more slowly than humans.

## Computers

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A **daemon** is a type of program found in computers running [operating systems](#) based on [Unix](#) like [Linux](#), [BSD](#), and [Mac OS X](#). (In [Windows](#) these programs are usually called "services" instead.) It usually starts when the computer starts, and does useful things. Some daemons start other programs after waiting until a certain time of day, or wait for you to ask for a file from another computer. The term is a reference to [Maxwell's Demon](#), not religion.

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## References

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1. [↑](#) *The Ashgate research companion to monsters and the monstrous*. Asa Simon Mittman, Peter Dendle. London. 2016. [ISBN 978-1-351-89432-6](#). [OCLC 974040296](#).

## Other websites

[[change](#) | [change source](#)]

- [Demons in the Catechism of the Catholic Church](#): Hyperlinked references to demons in the online Catechism of the Catholic Church
- [Dictionary of the History of Ideas: Archived](#) 2005-03-30 at the [Wayback Machine](#) Demonology
- [A to Z list of Demons](#)<sup>[[permanent dead link](#)]</sup>
- [Demonic Possession](#)

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