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# Origins of Omens and Superstitions

By Alexa Benedict

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Throughout human history, superstitions have been utilized to provide an explanation for the seemingly unexplainable. Whether it is death, sorrow, sickness or phenomenon, references to biblical subjects or ordinary instances are forever tainted with a ruining reputation of bad luck. Despite the fact that knowledge of the natural world and causations for occurrences are greatly understood, society still bewares Friday the 13th and spilling salt. These common fears of ordinary, benign actions are traced back to very common and influential predicaments like the bible or diseases.

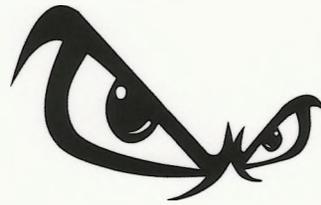


Revelations 13:8 states, "Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred three-score and six." From this biblical text the superstition of 666 is formed. The number has

**The biblical number of sin, falling just short of the fullness and perfection of the number 7, repeated three times for emphasis.**

long since been foreboded by Christians and others alike. Numerous groups use the symbol to show rebellion, anarchy, Satanism, or other "evil" focuses. The number has made plenty of appearances in Hollywood, literature, music, and artwork. According to the researcher Frances Flannery from *Bible Odyssey*, the number is a mockery at the divine number of seven, which is seen as full, complete, and the number of days creation lasted. Six is the partial number and lacking of holiness; thus, the number is poisoned with a ghastly reputation. The reason for the reputation could

also extend from Nero Caesar, a Roman emperor, according to Wayne Jackson from the *Christian Courtier*. Nero was Caesar at the time Revelation was thought to be written. He was described as a horrific ruler and of a "beastly" character. He was greatly critiqued and feared as manifestation of evil. His name translated from Greek to Hebrew coincidentally adds up to 666. The mark of the beast may have been greatly attributed to the persona of Nero and how close it was to the descriptions of Satan.



**The "Evil Eye" is a force to be reckoned with!**

Across Central American, Greece, Mexico, the Americas, Rome, India, the Mediterranean, the worst curse to deliver is an evil look. The

dismay of a bad glance is thought to be the fear of shamans having the ability to gift death to anyone they please. With their magical abilities, the only way to ward off such a danger was by amulets or other special jewelry. This oldest piece of protective jewelry was found in Croatia with an extraordinary age of 1,800 years, found on the *Ancient Origins* website. The ring was designed to protect the wearer from evil magic or the evil eye by its painted eye and rabbit for good fortune. The evil eye was a force to be reckoned with. Even the bible made references to the superstition (Matthew 6:22, Proverbs 28:22). The evil eye in India is named "Buri Nazar" and anyone, not just a shaman, can send illness, bad luck, or death by a gaze. Today, society still frowns upon the bad expression of strangers or foes.

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Death has sundry omens that range from culture to culture, a common theme among them: the bird. Birds are a humongous symbol for dying. They are seen as the messenger for death when they fly in a house or sit on a windowsill. The juncture of having a bird fly in a building is agreeably rare. When it happens around a sorrowful death or near an ill-stricken home, it is easily blamed on the animal. The origin of the superstition is not entirely pinpointed to an exact thing. Terry Sovil in his article "Black Witch Moth Butterfly of Death" noted, one cause originated in Mexico where the bird omen is a prominent wise tale; the Black Witch Moth is native to Mexico and is large enough to look like a bird or bat. The moth even goes by the name of "The Butterfly of Death." It is attracted to fruit and indoor environments and can easily scare the life out of a homeowner. The catapult to fame for the widely-known bird omen could be literature and entertainment. Edgar Allen Poe wrote "The Raven" in 1845 and told of an eerie bird that drove a man to madness. *The Birds* by Daphne du Maurier is an example of the fear of birds the their link to death. The story was even adapted into a film later on and became a hit; thus, the superstition was kept alive and well in modern society.

Instinctual fears that have shaped how humans have developed their early lives in cultures long ago still shape today. People have distain towards numbers, and certain gestures, or even animals. The legacy of old scary stories and wise tales has left a superstitious mark on our modern culture whether it is behavior or themes in our pop culture. The origins of these beliefs are problems that have long been proven with the simple rule: correlation is not causation.

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