

## Rtant eleme

Ritual was a very important element in Klingon society. While the Klingons were not a religious people as such, they did believe that deities existed at one time. However, Klingon warriors supposedly slew their gods as they were considered to be more trouble than they were worth. They believed that once a Klingon died, the spirit exited the body, leaving behind a worthless shell to be disposed of. (VOY: "Emanations") In the Klingon death ritual, it was traditional for those on hand to howl into the sky as a warning to the afterlife that a Klingon warrior was about to arrive. (TNG: "Heart of Glory"; DS9: "Tears of the Prophets") In some cases a funeral dirge was sung in memory of the deceased, or friends sat with the body to protect it from predators, a practice known as ak'voh. (DS9: "The Ship") Furthermore, a Klingon who was unable to fight, and hence is unable to live as a warrior anymore, had the traditional obligation of committing the hegh'at, which was the Klingon ritual suicide. Tradition dictated that the eldest son or a close personal friend must assist. That person's role was to hand the dying Klingon a knife so that he can plunge it into his heart, remove it, and then wipe the blood on his own sleeve. (TNG: "Ethics") The Klingon afterlife was supposedly divided into two branches. The dishonored were taken to Gre'thor aboard the Barge of the Dead, a vessel captained by Kortar, the first Klingon. Kortar was supposedly the one who had originally killed the gods who created him and was condemned to ferry the dishonored to Gre'thor as a punishment. Once in Gre'thor, the dishonored were watched over by Fek'Ihr, a vaguely Klingon-esque figure. While it may be tempting to view Fek'Ihr as the Klingon equivalent of the Human devil, according to Kang, the Klingons have no devil. (TNG: "Devil's Due"; VOY: "Barge of the Dead"; TOS: "Day of the Dove")