

# (Through the Bible) Job 1-4

by Chuck Smith

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*The sermon explores the profound themes of suffering and faith as illustrated in the life of Job, emphasizing God's sovereignty and the human response to trials.*

**Duration:** 54:28

**Scripture:** Job 3:1-3, Job 3:11-13, Job 3:17-19, Job 3:23, Job 42:7, Job 42:11, Job 42:16-17

**Topics:** "Suffering And Faith", "Gods Sovereignty"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the story of Job from the Bible. Job was a man who experienced extreme loss and suffering, losing his wealth, possessions, and even his children. The preacher emphasizes that when we lose everything, our deepest longings and quests are exposed. The sermon highlights the importance of focusing on the essential aspects of life and not getting caught up in non-essentials. The preacher also points out that the story of Job teaches us that the ways of God are beyond our understanding, and that the same needs and struggles that Job faced are still relevant to us today.

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## Transcript

Shall we turn now to the book of Job, chapter 1. As we come to the book of Job, we actually enter into a new section of the Old Testament. As you know, the Old Testament is divided into different divisions. The first five books comprising what is often called the Pentateuch, the books of the law.

The next several books are historic, as they deal with the history of the nation of Israel from the time that they have come out of Egypt and they begin as a nation in the land. And it covers that period of history while they are in the land of Israel through the Babylonian captivity and through the repatriation and the regathering again to Israel. And the books of history take us up to about 400 BC.

Now we are entering into a third part of the Old Testament, the books that are known as the books of poetry. And these include Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon. And they are Hebrew poetry.

And in Hebrew poetry, it is unlike our English poetry in that Hebrew poetry does not rhyme words, but actually gives sort of parallel thoughts or contrasting thoughts. And their sense of literature and poetry is found not in the rhyming of a word or not in a meter, but in the thoughts themselves, the paralleling thoughts or the rhyming thoughts. The words don't necessarily rhyme, but there is a rhyme or a parallelism

within the thoughts or a contrast.

The way of the righteous and the way of the wicked. For the righteous shall flourish, but the wicked shall be cut off. The righteous, the wicked.

And so you have the contrast between the thoughts or you have parallel thoughts where they are building the way of the Lord is right, the way of the Lord is true, the way of the Lord is just. And so you are giving parallel thought concepts. So Job is the first of the books of poetry.

It has been considered perhaps older than the book of Genesis, though Genesis of course deals with history that predates Job. Yet there is a Jobab mentioned in Genesis that is very possibly the Job of this book who lived contemporarily with Abraham. So it is possible that Job dates back as far as does Abraham, just a couple of generations away from Noah and the flood.

Thus in the book of Job, which is one of the oldest books of man's literature, the expression of the thoughts of some of the earliest men, once writing was developed and thoughts could be recorded, we find that men from the beginning have been pretty much the same. Though our cultures have changed and times have changed from Job, yet basically the same things that were a problem to Job are the same things that become a problem to us. The same needs that Job expressed are the same needs that still exist in man today.

In Job, we have the picture of a man who was reduced, perhaps more than any other man has ever been reduced, to just the bare essence of existence. With Job it's just raw existence. Everything that we think as necessary for life, everything that we consider to be important for our lives was stripped away from Job.

His possessions, his family, his friends, his health, lost everything. He even lost the consciousness of the sense of his own worth as he began to curse the day that he was born, cry out for death. Now, when you have lost everything, then is when is exposed the deepest longings and quest of man.

You see, you're not worried about where shall we go to eat after church tonight. And this doesn't become a real major issue, a point of argument and debate. Or what are we going to do tomorrow on the holiday? You see, we crowd and fill our minds with a lot of things that really aren't essential to life because we have friends and we have many interests.

And these things can become very important to us. And unfortunately, people can spend their whole lives in things that really don't matter. A whole life can be wasted in non-essentials.

It isn't what shall we eat or shall we eat or not or can we eat or not, but it becomes then the argument is what is the choice of what we are going to eat? Well, I have a taste for Mexican food. Well, I have a taste for Italian food. Well, I want Mexican food.

I want the chips with the sauce. Well, I want lasagna. And you call the attorney to get a divorce.

Oh, how tragic that man can spend his life majoring in minors and never, never come to the real issues of life. Now, with Job, man, it was just existence. Everything was stripped away.

Now, just the raw person, what are the things that are expressed? What are the cries? What are the needs? They are the basic needs of man and the basic needs of life that are expressed at this point. And thus, Job becomes a very interesting book to us as we listen to the cries of Job as they deal with the

deepest issues of life. The story of Job is an interesting story and it is one that surely does confirm what God has declared in Isaiah.

Isaiah and Job expressed Himself. And that is that the ways of God are beyond our finding out. God said through Isaiah the prophet, My ways are not your ways, saith the Lord.

My ways are beyond your finding out. I do not pretend to understand everything about God. In fact, I must confess that I understand very little about God.

That's why I worship Him. If I could understand Him completely, then He would be on my level. And what would I have to worship? But because He is so much greater, vaster in wisdom and understanding and knowledge than I am, I stand in awe and reverence and I worship Him.

Now, He doesn't always do things my way. Nor does He always stop to explain to me why He did it His way. Though I sometimes demand that He does, He doesn't always even pay attention to my demands.

He just seems to go ahead and do what He wants to anyhow in spite of my objections. But I appreciate that because I have found a long time ago that I don't know very much. I fit in the category of which Shakespeare wrote when he said, Man, poor man, so ignorant in that which he knows best.

And I find I'm so ignorant in the things I know best. And thus, I am glad to submit my life, my will, to God and to His wisdom. And I am thankful that I can pray, Lord, I don't understand what You're doing, I don't like what You're doing, but I know that what You're doing is best, so just keep doing it.

Not my will, Your will, Lord, be done. The beginning of Job, it tells us a little background of him. Job lived in the land of Uz, wherever that is.

But then concerning him, it said he was a perfect man and upright, one that feared God or revered God and hated evil. Job was a good man, loving, reverencing God, hating evil. Now, he had seven sons and three daughters, plus 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 she-asses and a very great household so that this man was the greatest of all of the men of the East.

A good man. A wealthy man. A man who loved God and hated evil.

And his sons seemed to be partiers. So in his concern for his sons, daily he would offer sacrifices for them and say, Lord, forgive them. If in their partying they say something that is contrary or against Thee, Lord, grant them forgiveness.

And he was constantly praying for his children. The background of the man. Now, we turn from this man and now we are ushered into the heavenly scenes.

We are now at the throne of God and the angels are coming and presenting themselves to God. And along with the angels, here comes Satan. Now, even after Satan's fall, it seems that he had access and does have access to the throne of God.

Why does God allow him access there? I told you I don't know everything about God and I don't know. It's a question in my mind. The Bible says he is the accuser of the brethren and he accuses them before God day and night.

Now, we find him in that position right here. He is accusing Job after God brings up the subject of Job. But first of all, when Satan comes in to present himself before God, God says, Oh, where have you been? He says, Oh, I've been cruising around the world.

Going to and fro throughout it, walking up and down. God said, Oh, have you considered my servant Job? God's doing a little bragging now. He's got one down there who really loves him.

He's a perfect man. He hates evil. Praying for his children.

The word considered is the word that I'm interested in though because it is actually a military term. It is the term that is used of a general who is studying a city before he attacks it in order that he might develop his strategy whereby he can destroy the city. So he's watching when they open the gates, the method of which they open the gates, how do the people come out, what gates are the most easily attacked and he's developing his whole strategy in order that he might attack and destroy the city.

That's the Hebrew word, the background of the word. It's a military term. Have you been studying Job? Seeking to develop the strategy whereby you might destroy him? Have you considered my servant Job? Now, God's witness of Job.

Perfect man and upright. He loves me. He hates evil.

And Satan frighteningly declares, yes, I've seen that fellow. I've studied him. And not only had Satan been studying Job, but he had developed a whole philosophy concerning Job.

He said, Job has been blessed of you. Look, he's the wealthiest man in the East. He has everything anybody could ever desire or want.

Job is just serving you because you've blessed him so much. Who wouldn't serve you if you blessed them like that? And you've put a hedge around him and I can't get to him. This interests me.

The hedge that God puts around his children. He shall give his angels charge over thee. To keep thee in all thy ways, to bear thee up lest at any time you dash your foot against a stone.

And God has a hedge around us. Satan is complaining about that hedge. Let me get at him.

Let me at him. Let me take away his wealth. And he's gonna curse you to your face.

Job only serves you because it pays such big dividends. So God said to Satan, alright. I will let you at him.

Only don't touch him. You can touch his possessions. Don't touch him.

So it came to pass in a certain day while his children were feasting and drinking in his oldest son's house. There came a messenger to Job and he said, your oxen were plowing and the asses were feeding beside them and the Sabians fell upon them and took them away and they killed all of your servants and I'm the only one that is left and I have come to tell you. And before he could finish his message of despair, a second servant came and he said, the fire of God is fallen from heaven and hath burned up the sheep and the servants and it has consumed them and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

And while he was still talking, there came another and said, the Chaldeans have made three bands. They fell upon your camels and carried them away and they've killed all of your servants with the edge of the

sword and I'm the only one that has escaped and I've come to tell you. And while he was yet speaking, another came and said, your sons and daughters, while they were having this big banquet, a wind came out of the east and it blew down the house and they were all of them crushed to death and their servants with them.

Wipe out in a moment's time your wealth, your possessions and even all of your children are taken away from you. What do you do? Job fell on his face there in the dirt and he blessed God. He said, naked I came from my mother's womb, naked I'm going to return.

The Lord has given, the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord. And in all of these things, Job did not curse God, neither did he charge God foolishly. I would like to say that I have heard many people charge God foolishly.

Maybe they didn't curse God, but they've made foolish charges against God. I've heard people say, I don't think God cares about me at all. I don't think God loves me.

Those are foolish charges against God. Sometimes because of our circumstances, we are prone to make foolish charges against God. But Job didn't do that.

He passed test one. So, back again to the heavenly scene. Another day, and again, the sons of God are presenting themselves before Jehovah and Satan is coming with them to present himself before the Lord.

I have to say concerning Satan, I do, well, would you say admire? This guy has a lot of chutzpah. I mean, to go in and stand before God, to present himself before God, takes quite a bit. And God again said, hey, where have you been? As though God didn't know.

He said, oh, I've been messing around down on the earth, going to and fro, walking up and down in it. God said, hey, have you considered my servant Job? Good man. He's upright.

He loves good. He hates evil. Satan, having failed the first philosophy of Job proving to be false, had his second philosophy.

Now, in the second philosophy, Satan shows his cunning understanding of human nature, because the psychologists tell us that one of man's strongest, most basic instincts is that of self-preservation. It's probably the strongest instinct that you have. Self-preservation.

And so Satan, recognizing this to be true, said, skin for skin, all that a man has, will he give for his life? You put limitations on what I could do to him. You didn't let me touch him. Now, you let me get at him, and he'll curse you to your face.

And so God said, alright, you may touch him, but spare his life. Again, God placing the restrictions and limitations upon that which Satan can do. Now, I believe that God does place upon Satan the limitations.

The Bible says that God will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able to bear. You see, God has put the limitations. Satan can go so far, but God says, alright, that's as far as you go.

Now, as far as I'm concerned, God lets him go too far. I would just assume God bottled the guy up and ship him off into outer space somewhere. But yet, he is acting really under the government of God because God places the restrictions and the limitations upon what he can do.

Brings up a problem. If God does control Satan, then why doesn't God bottle him up and ship him out of the universe? If God one day is going to cast him and his followers into this place scripturally that is known as Gehenna, into outer darkness, then why doesn't God do it now and save us all the miseries? Why does Satan have the liberties that God has granted to him? The power that God has granted to him? Why did God allow him to come into the Garden of Eden? Why does God allow him the freedom to war against us? It's all involved in, why did God create you? God created you in order that he might have an object to love and from which he might receive love. Now, in order to receive meaningful love, it has to be a free will involved.

You cannot be a robot. You've got to have a free will, the capacity and power of choice in order that your love for God might truly be a meaningful love. And thus, God gave us the capacity of choice, the free will, but what value is that unless there's something to choose? To have the power of choice and yet nothing to choose would be totally meaningless.

So, God not only had to create us with the capacity of choice, but he had to allow the opportunity of an alternate choice. And thus, Satan was allowed to rebel against God. And he was allowed to come to man and to offer man an alternate choice in order that if man chose at that point to love God, God would know that the choice was from the heart and it was meaningful and God could then receive praise and glory from the meaningful love that was expressed to him.

Taking a chance, man might make the wrong choice. You might be disappointed, your heart broken. Such was the case.

But God didn't know that down through the years there would be those who would make the right choice and for the treasure of having the love of those who would choose to love him and serve him, he allowed the choice knowing that many would make the wrong choice but yet also knowing that there would be those who would choose to love him and would express their love for him and he could come into a meaningful relationship of love and fellowship with those who chose to know him and to follow him and to love him. So the choice is still there and Satan is still operating in order to encourage you to take the alternate choice. But the fact that you resist the devil and the temptations and the seductions and the allurement and the enticements and those things that he seeks to place in your path to cause you to turn away from God and the Word of God and the Law of God and to follow after your own lusts and desires, the fact that you resist those temptations and you still love God and you gather and you worship God and you sing together of your love and your praise and you spend your time in meditation, in his Word and just in fellowship with him, that fellowship is extremely meaningful because God knows you don't have to but it's coming from your heart.

And for that reason God created man and God has allowed the whole mess to exist in order that there might be at least within it those who would love him with a sincere love. You don't have to love God. You don't have to serve God.

There are very attractive alternate decisions but man must make his choice and God is honored when man makes the right choice. Now, Satan then is a tool that God uses. God has placed him under certain restrictions and still there are restrictions however Job is now afflicted with boils all over his body, running sores.

He takes a piece of broken pottery and scrapes his body, extremely painful, stinky, loathsome, covered. He sits in a bed of ashes because it's impossible to sit down or lie down anywhere without the extreme

pain of this staph type infection that covered his entire body. And his wife coming near to him, smelling the foul odor, seeing the pain and the suffering and the misery of a man who has been reduced to this, said to her husband, why don't you get it over with? Why don't you curse God and die? Now, that came from a heart of love.

It hurt her to see her husband in such total misery. Job, I can't stand to see you like this. Why don't you get it over with? Why don't you curse God and die? But he said unto her, you speak as one of the foolish women speaks.

Shall we receive only good from the hand of God and shall we not receive evil? In all of this, did not Job sin with his lips? Now, there were three friends who when they heard of the misery of Job, decided that they would come and visit with him. Eliphaz, who was from Timnan, Timan is the Timanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Namathite. And they had made an appointment to gather together and to mourn with him and to comfort him.

When they saw him, they didn't recognize him. And they were just so shocked that they just began to weep. They tore their clothes and they just sat down weeping.

And for seven days and for seven nights, they sat there. And no one said a word to him because their grief was extremely great. And finally Job spoke up.

And Job begins to curse the day of his birth. Job opened his mouth and he cursed his day. Notice he didn't curse God, just the day in which he was born.

Let the day perish wherein I was born and the night in which it was said, there's a boy that is conceived. Let that day be darkness. Let not God regard it from above.

Neither let the light shine upon it. Let darkness and the shadow of death stain it. Let a cloud dwell upon it.

Let the blackness of the day terrify it. As for the night, let darkness seize upon it. And you notice the repetition of darkness, blackness, darkness.

This is Hebrew poetry. It's that repetition and all of a thought and of an idea with amplification upon it. Let that night be solitary.

Let no joyful sound come therein. Let them curse it as the curse of the day who are ready to raise up their mourning. And let the stars of the twilight thereof be dark.

Let it look for light and have none. Neither let it see the dawning of the day, because it shut not up the doors of my mother's womb, nor hid the sorrows from my eyes. Why died I not from the womb? Why wasn't I stillborn? Why did I not give up the ghost when I came out of her belly? Why did the knees prevent me? Or why the breast that I should nurse? For now should I have lain still and been quiet.

I should have slept. Then I had been at rest. With the kings and the counselors of the earth which built desolate places for themselves.

Or with the princes that had gold who filled their houses with silver. Or as an hidden untimely birth I had not been as infants which never saw light. Why didn't I die where it would all be over with? I would have just been quiet.

I would have never experienced anything. There, he said, the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary be at rest. There the prisoners rest together.

They hear not the voice of the oppressor. The small and the great are there. The servant is free from his master.

Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery and life to the bitter in soul which long for death but it does not come. They dig for it more than for hid treasures which rejoice exceedingly and are glad which can find the grave. Why is light given to a man whose way is hid and in whom God hath edged in? For my sighing cometh before I eat and my roarings are poured out like the waters.

For the thing which I greatly feared has come upon me and that which I was afraid of has come unto me. I was not in safety, neither had I rest, neither was I quiet, yet trouble came." Now, let me point out first of all that you should not take the statements of Job in his misery and seek to develop from them biblical doctrine. For the Seventh-day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, and others have taken these statements of Job here and they have developed the doctrine of soul sleep out of these statements of Job.

Where he declares verse 17, There the wicked cease from troubling, there the weary be at rest, there the prisoners rest together, they hear not the voice of the oppressor. He's talking about the grave. Why didn't I just die? Where even the wicked is at rest, where nobody is troubled, where there's silence, where there's nothing.

Remember now the context. This is Job. He's crying out of the misery of his own experience.

These are not God's inspired truths that he is crying. These are his endeavor to understand God and the ways of God. Job is actually challenging God.

Why did God ever allow me to live? Why wasn't I born dead? And the reason why you cannot take these statements of Job as he is talking about death, where there is no trouble, where everybody is at rest and peace and so forth. The reason why you cannot take these for biblical doctrine is verified in the 38th chapter of the book of Job. For after the vain endeavor of man to understand what was going on, God finally came on the scene.

And in the 38th chapter, when God began to speak to Job, God began to question Job. He said, first of all, the first question, who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Now, what is expressed in Job is the greatest knowledge of the day, the philosophies of men and the wise men of that day. And God speaks of all of their speculations of being words without knowledge, which indeed they were.

All of this counsel lacks real knowledge to it. But it did. None of them really understood what was really going on behind the scenes.

Who is this that darkeneth words of counsel without knowledge? And then in verse 17, God said to Job, have the gates of death been opened unto you or have you seen the doors of the shadow of the death? Okay, Job, you've been talking about, hey, I wish I were dead, where everything is quiet, where there is no trouble, where there are no problems. Everyone rests together. God said, well, hey, have the gates of death, have you been there? Do you know what's going on there? You know, you're talking, Job, with words that have no knowledge.

You're talking of things you don't know about. You haven't been there. You don't know that that's the case.

Therefore, if you want to develop doctrine concerning what transpires to a person when he dies, you cannot go to the words of Job or to the words of Solomon in Ecclesiastes, nor even to the Psalms, because many times these men were speaking of things of which they did not know, expressing the ideas, the thoughts, the wisdom of man and the limited knowledge of man. If you really want to know what happens beyond the grave, you better go to the words of Jesus. Who knows better than He? If you want to develop doctrine of what happens when a person dies, you have to go to the words of Christ or to the inspired words of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament.

God rebukes Job because he's talking about something that he knows nothing about. Talking about death and what he imagines what would be if he were dead. But God said, you're wrong.

Now, there are those blessed, misguided saints who are just as ignorant as Zophar and Bildad and Eliphaz who take the Scripture where Job declared, what the thing I feared, the thing I feared has come upon me. And they say, that was Job's problem. He lacked faith.

And he was fearing these things all the time. And you know, what you say is what you get. And so Job had this fear which shows the lack of faith.

Had he had enough faith, this never would have happened to him. That's as stupid and ignorant as Eliphaz or Bildad or any of the rest of them that were trying to understand Job's condition. These men show the same ignorance.

Only they have no excuse for their ignorance because God has told us in the beginning what was going on. At least Eliphaz and Bildad, Zophar, they have an excuse for their ignorance because they weren't able to read the first chapter of Job to know what was really happening. But it is... Well, I can't get into that.

But it is... It's not biblical exposition. It is sheer stupidity to use this Scripture to say, well, you know, the person, because you were fearing this, this is why it happened to you and all. The thing that you fear is going to come upon you.

That is not true. You can look at David and he said, I know that one day Saul is going to kill me. That's a negative confession, David.

What you say is what you get. No, Saul didn't kill him. You don't have to be worried about making some negative confession.

You know, it isn't that God is waiting and listening and you make some negative... Alright, you said it, so I'm going to do it. You know, what kind of a God is that? In the same token, you can make a positive confession for something that is not good for you and God is gracious enough not to do it for you. You don't control God and please don't try.

The world is in enough of a mess now and it would be even worse if I were the one that began to take over and order the things that were going to happen. So Job has made his complaint and so Eliphaz, his friend who came to comfort him, he said, if we attempt to talk to you, will you be grieved? But really, after what you've said, who can keep silent? He said, behold, you have instructed many people. You have strengthened weak hands.

Your words have held up the person who was falling and you have strengthened feeble knees. But now, when it comes to you, you faint. It touches you and you're troubled.

Oh, those are nice words to hear, aren't they? From a friend who's come to comfort you in all your misery. Well, you know, great one you are. You know, you were counseling and lifting up others.

Your words held them up and all and you were going around doing this. But now it comes to you and look what happens. Man, you faint.

You know, you go under. Is not this thy fear, thy confidence, thy hope, the uprightness of thy ways? Remember, I pray thee. What innocent man ever perished? And you see already he's beginning to get the knife out.

Job, you're not innocent. What innocent man ever perished? Well, let me tell you this. Many innocent men have perished.

There's not really good logic to what Eliphaz is saying at all. In fact, the most innocent of all men was crucified. So there really isn't sound wisdom in what Eliphaz is saying.

It's just, you know, the argumentations of men which often lack real wisdom. Even as I have seen they that plow iniquity and sow wickedness reap the same. So, Job, you're just getting what you reap, what you sowed.

You're reaping it now. Those that sow iniquity and wickedness, they reap the same. By the blast of God they perish and by the breath of his nostrils they are consumed.

The roaring of a lion, the voice of the fierce lion, and the teeth of young lions are broken. The old lion perisheth for lack of a prey and the stout lion's whelps are scattered abroad. Now, he said, he gets all mystic, a thing was brought secretly to me.

My ear received a little of it. In the thoughts from the visions in the night when a deep sleep had fallen upon men, a fear came upon me and trembling, it made all my bones shake. A spirit passed before my face and the hair in my flesh stood up.

And it stood still, but I could not discern the form of it. And an image was before my eyes and there was silence. And I heard a voice saying, Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his Maker? Behold, he put no trust in his servants and his angels he charged with folly.

So, the guy comes off now super spiritual. Have you ever had those people come around super spiritual, you know, when you're in trouble? And, you know, visions and dreams and voices of angels and spirits and all, you know, and this hooey thing, you know. And so, here's all he lived as, you know, when other men were asleep, in a deep sleep at night.

The spirit passed by. I could tell it was there. I couldn't tell the form.

And it began to speak, you know. He charged his angels with folly and how much less in those that dwell in houses of clay. Interesting and picturesque phrase of our body.

A house of clay. But in the New Testament it said we have a treasure in this earthen vessel. Same thing, in this house of clay.

There's a fabulous treasure. For God is dwelling in this house. Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you? And we have this glorious treasure, he said, in these earthen vessels, that the glory, God has put a lot of treasure in this dumb clay pot in order that the glory will always go to God, not to the clay pot.

I'm just the vessel, but I have the capacity to contain the wealthiest treasure in the world. Even God will dwell within my life. But it is ridiculous, it's ludicrous to put something of such great value in such a common container, just a clay pot.

But God has done it. That the glory will not be in the vessel, but in the contents. Now it is always pathetic and sad and tragic when the clay pot tries to get the glory and tries to draw attention and glory to itself rather than to the one who dwells within, doing the work.

So I love this, it's very picturesque. Men who dwell in houses of clay, talking about our body, whose foundation is the dust which are crushed before the moth. They are destroyed from morning to evening, they perish forever without any regarding it.

Doth not their excellency which is in them go away, they die even without wisdom.

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