

## Module 3: Exploring Good, Evil, and Noble Sacrifice

### Topic 2 Content: "The Wife's Lament" from the *Exeter Book*

I of myself this lay recite  
full sadly,  
my own fortune:  
I that may say,  
[5] what miseries I've sustain'd,  
since I grew up,  
new or old,  
yet not more than now.  
Ever have I the penalty gain'd  
[10] of my wanderings.  
First my lord departed  
hence from his people,  
over the billows' play;  
I had nightly care,  
[15] where my chieftain  
in the world might be.  
When I departed journeying,  
to seek my lord,  
a friendless exile,  
[20] for my sad misery  
resolv'd this man's  
kinsmen to devise,  
through dark counsel,  
that they might part us;  
[25] that we most distant  
in the world's-realm  
might live, most estranged,  
and it irk'd me.  
Promis'd my lord,  
[30] me to take up abode.  
I had dear ones few,  
in this country,  
kind friends;  
therefore is my spirit sad,  
[35] when I to myself full like  
a man found  
unfortunate,  
sad in soul,  
his mind concealing,  
[40] death meditating,  
his bearing kind.  
Full oft we promised,  
that us naught should part,  
save death alone  
[45] naught else:  
that is again changed,  
is now as it had not been  
our friendship.  
I must far enough  
[50] for my much lov'd friend

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enmities endure.  
They bid me dwell  
in the forest-grove,  
under the oak tree,  
[55] in the earth-cavern.  
Old is this earth-hall,  
I am all wearied:  
dim are the dells,  
the downs high,  
[60] unpleasant the town-dwellings,  
with briars o'ergrown,  
the house joyless.  
Full oft me here heavily o'erwhelmed  
my lord's departure.  
[65] My friends are in the earth;  
the once dear living ones  
the grave inhabit.  
Then I ere dawn  
alone go  
[70] under the oak tree,  
among these earth-caves;  
there I may sit  
the long summer day,  
there I can weep  
[75] my exile-journeyings,  
my many hardships;  
for I may never  
from my mind's  
sorrow rest,  
[80] nor from all the weariness  
which me in this life hath over-  
whelm'd.  
Ever must a young man be  
sad of mind?  
[85] Hard-hearted's thought!  
shall such have  
blithe looks,  
even when care of breast,  
constant sorrows, he should endure  
[90] let be of himself along  
all his worldly joy,  
be he full widely foe  
of the far country?  
There my friend sits,  
[95] under a rocky shelter,  
whiten'd with the storm —  
my friend weary in spirit —  
with water whelm'd;  
in his drear hall,  
[100] my friend endures

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great mental care,  
he too oft remembers  
a more joyous dwelling.  
Woe is to him who must

[105] (from weariness)  
his friend await.