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Best wishes!

Guidelines for getting & giving

by Gary Snyder

The *Wish* and *Limited Wish* spells are an important part of the ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS™ game, and sooner or later every player and Dungeon Master will be confronted with the question of how to make a *Wish* or how to fulfill one.

The Players Handbook describes these spells in the vaguest of terms — a necessary condition, because any attempt to define the *Wish* concept naturally involves limiting the scope and power of the *Wish* to the characteristics described by the definition.

It is up to individual DMs and players to define and interpret the *Wish* and *Limited Wish* in such a way that the use of those spells in a campaign does not have an unfair or inappropriate effect on play. The ten General Principles of Wishes, presented and explained in the text which follows, represent one possible way of establishing "ground rules" for the use of *Wish* spells which can be used to the benefit of DM and players alike.

The General Principles below do not narrow the power and scope of a *Wish* to the point where a DM can quote a General Principle as a self-explanatory result of a *Wish*. The intent of the Principles is to encompass broad concepts which are relatively easy to apply in any specific case which might arise. The stricture set down by a certain Principle may help to determine whether a *Wish* has any effect at all in a certain situation, or, if it is effective, what degree of success is attained by the wisher in achieving the desired end by the desired means. Usually, a Principle will be no help at all in determining exactly how a *Wish* ought to be worded or exactly how it ought to be fulfilled.

The Principles are meant to apply to *Wish* and *Limited Wish* spells, wishes acquired from rings, scrolls, swords, relics and artifacts, and wishes obtained from efreet and noble djinn. They do not (necessarily) pertain to "wishes" granted by devils, demons or gods, which are actually forms of Divine (or demoniac or diabolic) Intervention.

Wishes vs. Divine Intervention

A *Wish* or *Limited Wish* is simply a magic spell of a specific level which can be used as a general-purpose method to achieve some desired result. Any *Wish* is

The General Principles of Wishes

I: Wishes are 9th-level magic spells and are limited in power accordingly; Limited Wishes are 7th-level spells which are even more limited.

II: Wishes cannot change what has already happened, but they can be used to alter or negate the result of some prior happening.

III: Wishes cannot directly affect that which will happen, except in the sense that everything that will happen is a direct result of what is and has been happening.

IV: Wishes are bound by the laws under which they themselves are brought about and used.

V: Wishes have no authority and no power over the abstract, the insubstantial, or the non-concrete.

VI: Wishes will always act in the simplest manner possible while abiding by the wording of the Wish itself.

VII: Wishes are general-purpose spells, and as such may be used voluntarily in a number of ways, with varying chances for success.

VIII: Wishes will rarely achieve more than one end, and never more than two.

IX: Wishes will fulfill, to the limits of their power, not only the desired end but the means by which that end is brought about.

X: Wishes are impartial, objective and consistent.

limited in power and bound by the laws of the universe in which it is employed.

By contrast, Divine Intervention is an action of a deity or god, just as diabolic and demoniac interventions are actions of devils and demons respectively. While these three types of beings are also bound by laws which govern their environments, their power in their own realms and in those realms not specially designated as belonging to another similar being is nearly unlimited. An act of intervention can actually change that which has already occurred, or can directly and definitively alter the course of future events — things which a *Wish* cannot accomplish.

The General Principles of Wishes are not designed to apply to intervention by a deity, demon or devil. The granting of favors by such beings cannot be governed by any general rules, since each instance of intervention may produce drastically different results depending

upon the preference or the inclination of the deity at that certain time.

THE GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF WISHES

I

WISHES ARE 9TH-LEVEL MAGIC SPELLS AND ARE LIMITED IN POWER ACCORDINGLY; LIMITED WISHES ARE 7TH-LEVEL SPELLS WHICH ARE EVEN MORE LIMITED.

There is no such thing in the AD&D™ rules as a 10th-level spell, or any form of magical energy which is more potent than a 9th-level spell. If a *Wish* was unlimited in power, it would be theoretically possible for it to have the energy of a 10th-level spell — but then the *Wish* spell itself would have to be considered a 10th-level spell, and that is a contradiction. Using the same reasoning, a *Limited Wish* is limited in scope and power to what can be accomplished with the

energy of a 7th-level spell. In addition to these general limitations, there are specific instances cited in the AD&D rules where the use of a *Wish* is impossible or ineffective.

II

WISHES CANNOT CHANGE WHAT HAS ALREADY HAPPENED, BUT THEY CAN BE USED TO ALTER OR NEGATE THE RESULT OF SOME PRIOR HAPPENING.

If, for example, someone has been disintegrated, nothing short of divine intervention can change that fact: he *has* been disintegrated. The result of this occurrence, however, can be nullified by a *Wish* which causes the body of the victim to be reintegrated (see Principle VIII).

III

WISHES CANNOT DIRECTLY AFFECT THAT WHICH WILL HAPPEN, EXCEPT IN THE SENSE THAT EVERYTHING THAT WILL HAPPEN IS A DIRECT RESULT OF WHAT IS AND HAS BEEN HAPPENING.

A *Wish* has no real power to affect anything except at the precise moment it is uttered (see Principle II). Therefore, a *Wish* for a specific occurrence or situation to come about in the future — but not at the time the *Wish* is actually made — would have the effect of placing the wisher in circumstances at the present time that would most possibly bring about the desired end after the passage of the intervening time, but would not and could not constitute a guarantee that the desired event will happen.

IV

WISHES ARE BOUND BY THE LAWS UNDER WHICH THEY THEMSELVES ARE BROUGHT ABOUT AND USED.

In most AD&D universes, this will mean that a *Wish* cannot make something out of nothing or vice versa. For the creation of food, water, soft goods and other such items, raw materials (carbon, oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen) are usually available in abundance. However, the creation of a certain amount of iron, copper, gold, platinum, or other valuable materials is much more difficult because of the relative scarcity of such items. In any event, the creation of a quantity of material which is greater in mass than the spell-caster or wisher will be considered much more complex and energy-draining than the alternative of teleporting the wisher to the desired substance or vice versa (see Principle VI). For purposes of this determination, all magical items and all living beings (with the exception of the character using the *Wish*) are considered to be of infinite mass; that is, the creation of such items by a *Wish* is essentially impossible, since the energy of a *Wish* is not also infinite.

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V

WISHES HAVE NO AUTHORITY AND NO POWER OVER THE ABSTRACT, THE INSUBSTANTIAL, OR THE NON-CONCRETE.

In particular, a *Wish* cannot grant ownership, titles, or other stations which require an authority to confer them upon someone else. Nor can they remove such titles and privileges, either from the wisher or others. If a *Wish* deals wholly or primarily with abstract, intangible considerations, there can be no certainty that the *Wish* will achieve the desired end; at best, the *Wish* will put the wisher into circumstances which have the greatest possibility of achieving that end (see Principle III).

VI

WISHES WILL ALWAYS ACT IN THE SIMPLEST MANNER POSSIBLE WHILE ABIDING BY THE WORDING OF THE WISH ITSELF.

If a desired end may be accomplished with a lower-level spell than the wisher had in mind, for instance, and the means to achieve that end was not fully specified in the *Wish*, then the lower-level spell will be used. In general, the more mass or energy involved in the fulfillment of a *Wish*, the more complex the undertaking will be. "Creation" (see Principle IV) of a substance or material is more difficult than molecular rearrangement which might accomplish the same purpose. Molecular rearrangement is more difficult than destruction, destruction is more difficult than the teleportation of something, and teleportation is more difficult than simple enlightenment or knowledge given to the wisher.

VII

WISHES ARE GENERAL-PURPOSE SPELLS, AND AS SUCH MAY BE USED VOLUNTARILY IN A NUMBER OF WAYS, WITH VARYING CHANCES FOR SUCCESS.

To employ this principle properly, it is necessary to determine at what level of power the magic operates to cause the fulfillment of a particular wish. If the method involves the magic of a known spell, the level of the magic is easily determined from the rules; new spells or other types of magic will have to be compared to existing spells and magic by the DM before determining the level of magic involved. Chances for success (complete fulfillment of the wish) depend upon the type of *Wish* (magic-user or clerical) and the level of magic involved, according to the following chart:

| Spell Level | Full Wish M-U | Full Wish Cleric | Limited Wish M-U | Limited Wish Cleric |
|-------------|---------------|------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| 1-4 | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |
| 5 | 100% | 100% | 100% | 75% |
| 6 | 100% | 90% | 80% | 50% |

| | | | | |
|---|------|-----|-----|----|
| 7 | 100% | 75% | 50% | -- |
| 8 | 90% | -- | -- | -- |
| 9 | 75% | -- | -- | -- |

Often, but not always, when a spell level lower than the *Wish* itself is used to achieve the desired end, the manifestation of the magic will be similar to the spell in question but in an improved form (for instance, teleportation with no chance for error) because of the extra power of the *Wish* spell itself above and beyond the energy needed to make the wish come true. Spells which are "improved" in this manner are generally those of levels where the chance for success is 100%.

VIII

WISHES RARELY WILL ACHIEVE MORE THAN ONE END, AND NEVER MORE THAN TWO.

All spells are formulated to achieve a specific purpose, whether it be to neutralize poison in some creature, charm a hostile group of opponents, or restore life in an individual. It is not beyond the power of a *Wish* to reintegrate a character and even restore life to his body (constitution check applicable); even though those are two distinctly separate acts, they both contribute to the fulfillment of a specific purpose. In contrast, it would not be possible for a single *Wish* to teleport a group of characters out of the middle of a melee to a place of safety, accompanied by all the opponents' treasure (which, at the time of the *Wish*, is still in the possession of the opponents).

In any case except the most simply worded wishes, the DM will have to weigh the *Wish* in terms of how many ends it is designed to achieve. For example, how many dead characters can a *Wish* bring back to life all at once? The answer varies: If the deaths were all due to a single incident such as a cave-in, or if they all occurred within the same short period of time during melee, a *Wish* would probably be permitted to save all the victims, since only the effect of one short span of time is being altered, and in that respect only one end is being achieved. On the other hand, if half of a group of characters died in a cave-in and the other half in a run-in with an umber hulk, only one group of victims would be able, to be brought back to life with a single *Wish* — altering one occurrence, not two, and achieving only one end instead of two distinctly different purposes.

IX

WISHES WILL FULFILL, TO THE LIMITS OF THEIR POWER, NOT ONLY THE DESIRED END BUT THE MEANS BY WHICH THAT END IS BROUGHT ABOUT.

The wording of this Principle implies that a *Wish* spell has reasoning power of

its own which enables it to make a "choice" between various methods of achieving a desired end, and perhaps even distort or depart from the wording of the wish. This is NOT so!

A good example of the improper distortion of a *Wish* is the character who wishes for a demon to serve him as a slave — and gets sent to the Abyss to pick one out. Some DMs consider this a fair interpretation, claiming that it does not violate the wording of the wish. While this may be technically true (depending upon the actual wording), such action is in violation of the nature of a *Wish*.

It has been pointed out in earlier Principles that a *Wish* may be fulfilled in one of several different ways. In all cases, the *Wish* will be fulfilled in such a way that the end result is achieved as desired, and in the manner which it could reasonably be expected to be achieved. One of the biggest advantages of a *Wish* is its flexibility, but this is only an advantage as long as the DM and the players all use common sense and fairness in the wording and fulfillment of a desire.

X

WISHES ARE IMPARTIAL, OBJECTIVE AND CONSISTENT.

If a *Wish* works in a certain way in a certain situation, it should always work in the same manner in identical situations in the future — as long as the set of circumstances *directly* involved in the *Wish* is the same.

Sometimes it may be a matter of interpretation whether the conditions for a *Wish* are identical to the conditions that existed at a previous time when an earlier *Wish* was used. In any event, if the general conditions are the same and the *Wish* is worded identically to or generally the same as a previous *Wish*, the means of achieving an end and that end itself must be *generally* the same as they were for the first *Wish*.

If a DM is properly consistent in this fashion, it may become possible for players to "predict" the effects or the outcome of making a certain *Wish* at a certain time. Players should be permitted to have this knowledge and to be able to trust in it once they have figured out this "law of nature." Players should also be aware that the nature of a *Wish* makes it impossible to predict any outcome with certainty. The word "consistency" in the Principle stated above applies more to the approach and the motives of the DM (who grants the wish) than it does to the actual result of the *Wish*.

In no case should the DM's personal feelings for a player or a character have any influence on whether a *Wish* is granted or how it is put into effect. Petty emotions are neither impartial, objective nor consistent, and have no place in the implementation of a *Wish* or in any other aspect of an AD&D adventure.