

### Zohar III: 182a<sup>1</sup> on Qohelet 4:2—

Rabbi Hiyya opened, “**So I praise the dead, who have already died**, [more than the living who are still alive.]” (Ecclesiastes 4: 2). This verse has been discussed and established. Come and see: all the acts of the blessed Holy One accord with justice and truth. No one can object to Him or restrain the divine hand, saying: ‘What are You doing?’ For God acts according to His will.

“**So I praise the dead...**” Now, is King Solomon praising the dead more than the living? Look, one is called ‘living’ only if s/he follows a path of truth in this world, as is said, “**Benaiah son of Jehoiada, son of a living man**” (2 Samuel 23: 20), as has been established by the Companions. And a wicked person, who does not follow a path of truth is called ‘dead’. And he praises the dead more than the living?!?

“But surely, all the words of King Solomon were spoken in wisdom, as has been said! “**So I praise the dead...**”—if nothing were written, I would agree; but since it is written “**who have already died**”, another element appears, in wisdom. [This section of the verse] “**who have already died**” — [refers to] another time when they departed from the world and were rectified in the dust, given the opportunity to return to worldly life in order to be mended. After such a person’s time is completed, s/he dies—surely s/he is more praiseworthy than others who die. If you say, “He is judged another time in that world”—look at what is written: “**Distress does not arise twice**” (Nahum 1: 9)! All the more so, since s/he has already received punishment once and twice. Surely his place is prepared more gloriously than that of the living, who have not yet received punishment.

So it is written, “**So I praise the dead— who have already died...**” precisely! These are **living**, yet called **dead**. Why are they called **dead**? Because they have already tasted the taste of death; and although they exist in this world, they are **dead**, having returned from the dead. Furthermore, they are poised to rectify previous deeds, so they are called **dead**.

“**More than the living who are still alive**”—who have not yet tasted the taste of death nor received their punishment, and they do not know if they are worthy of that world or not.

Come and see: the righteous who are worthy of being bound in the Bundle of Life are privileged to see the supernal glory of the Holy King, as is said: “**to gaze upon the beauty of YHVH and to reflect in His palace.**” (Psalm 27: 4). As for them, their abodes are finer and higher than the rungs of all holy angels; for neither those above nor below are worthy of seeing such a lofty abode, as is written, “**No eye has seen, O God, but You, what you will do for one who awaits You**” (Isaiah 64: 3).

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<sup>1</sup> Zohar III: 182a, *Pritzker Zohar*, vol. IX, tr. Matt, pp. 213-216.

Those who are not as worthy as these have an abode below, according to their conduct. They are not privileged to ascend to that place and to see those what those above see; they are stationed in Lower Eden, no further.

“Now you might say, ‘What is Lower Eden?’ Well this is the Eden called Lower Wisdom; it presides over the terrestrial Garden, and the watchfulness of this Eden is upon it, no further. These exist in this Garden, delighting from this Eden.

What is the difference between Lower Eden and Higher Eden? **“Like the advantage of light over darkness”** (Ecclesiastes 2: 13). This Lower Eden is called עדנה (*ednah*), Delight—feminine. Higher Eden is called עדן (*eden*), Delight—masculine. Of it is written, **“No eye has seen, O God, but You.”**

This Lower Eden is called Garden in relation to Higher Eden, and this Garden is called Eden in relation to Lower Eden. Those who are located in the Lower garden delight from this Eden above them on every Sabbath and every new moon, as its written, **“From new moon to new moon and from Sabbath to Sabbath, [all flesh shall come to bow down before Me]”** (Isaiah 66: 23).

Concerning these, Solomon said, **“more than the living who are עדנה (*ednah*), still alive”**— for those [others] occupy a higher rung than these. Who are those? Those **“who have already died”** and received punishment twice. They are called refined silver that has entered fire once and twice—its dross expelled— now purified and cleansed.