

Second Letter Smyrna The Persecuted Assembly

Hazon (Revelation) 2:8-11

“And to the messenger of the assembly in Smyrna write, ‘This says the First and the Last, who became dead, and came to life: I know your works, and pressure, and poverty, yet you are rich, and the blasphemy of those who say they are Yehudim (Jews) and are not, but are a congregation of Satan. Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. See, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, in order to try you, and you shall have pressure ten days. Be trustworthy until death, and I shall give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies. He who overcomes shall by no means be harmed by the second death.’”

1. Name of the Assembly – Smyrna (Bitterness)

Hazon (Revelation) 2:8a

“And to the messenger of the assembly in Smyrna write...”

The name **Smyrna** means *bitterness*. And truly, this Assembly knew what bitterness tasted like. They were faithful yet crushed. Poor in the world’s eyes, but rich in heaven. Hated, slandered, and persecuted... yet honoured by Yeshua Himself.

The city of Smyrna, known today as **Izmir**, in modern-day Turkey, was a flourishing port city, wealthy and proud, filled with idolatry and deep loyalty to Rome. The pressure to conform to the emperor cult, to bow before pagan gods, was immense. And for those who refused, those who followed Yeshua, it meant imprisonment, poverty, and even death.

But here’s the beauty: **Smyrna is one of only two Assemblies in Revelation that receives no rebuke.** Only comfort. Only encouragement. Yeshua had nothing to correct in them. He simply said: *Hold on. Be faithful. Your reward is coming.*

Historically, the believers in this region faced unimaginable suffering. One of the most famous early martyrs was **Polycarp**, a disciple of the apostle Yohanan (John). In 156 C.E., he was burned alive in Smyrna for refusing to renounce Yeshua. His final words? “Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He has done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?”

From a prophetic timeline view, this is known as the **“Myrrh” period**, myrrh being a spice used for burial and embalming. A time when the Assembly was being prepared through suffering. From around 64 C.E., the persecution intensified under Nero and continued for several hundred years.

Smyrna represents **the suffering Body of Messiah**. Not just in history, but also today. There are still believers around the world who are imprisoned, beaten, and killed for the Name of Yeshua. And yet, like this faithful Assembly, they shine the brightest in the darkness.

This letter speaks to them... and to all of us who must endure hardship with faith and courage.

2. Character Description of Yeshua – The First and the Last

Hazon (Revelation) 2:8b

“This says the First and the Last, who became dead, and came to life.”

Before Yeshua encourages the persecuted believers in Smyrna, He reminds them **who** is speaking. He says, *“I am the First and the Last.”* This is no ordinary title. It’s a direct connection to the words of YHWH Himself in the prophets:

Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 44:6

“Thus said יְהוָה, Sovereign of Yisra’ĕl, and his Redeemer, יְהוָה of hosts, ‘I am the First and I am the Last, besides Me there is no Elohim.’”

Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 48:12

“Listen to Me, O Ya’aqob, and Yisra’ĕl, My called: I am He, I am the First, I am also the Last.”

Yeshua is not just echoing these words, He is declaring His unity with the Father, His eternal nature, His authority over time itself. He was there at the beginning... and He’ll be there at the end.

But then He adds something even more personal:

“Who became dead, and came to life.”

He reminds them that He **knows** suffering. He **tasted** death. He didn’t just observe it from heaven; He went through it. And He **overcame it**.

Revelation 1:17–18

“And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead, and He placed His right hand on me, saying, ‘Do not be afraid, I am the First and the Last, and the living One. And I became dead, and see, I am living for ever and ever. Amĕn. And I possess the keys of She’ol and of Death.’”

This is the message the believers in Smyrna needed to hear. They were facing imprisonment. Some would die for their faith. But death, for them, **was not the end**. Yeshua had already walked that path, and **He holds the keys**.

Revelation 1:8

“I am the ‘Aleph’ and the ‘Taw’, Beginning and End,’ says יְהוָה, ‘who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.’”

He is not only the eternal One, He is the **Resurrected One**. Death has no more power over Him. And if it has no power over Him, then it has no lasting power over those who belong to Him.

This description of Yeshua is deeply personal. It's not just theology, it's comfort. It's strength for the suffering. He's saying:

"I've been there. I know what it feels like to be crushed, rejected, and killed. But I came out alive. And you will too, if you remain faithful in Me."

To the Assembly living in the shadow of martyrdom, these words weren't abstract. They were everything.

3. Recognition – You Are Rich

Hazon (Revelation) 2:9

"I know your works, and pressure, and poverty, yet you are rich, and the blasphemy of those who say they are Yehudim and are not, but are a congregation of Satan."

Yeshua begins by saying, *"I know."* And when He says that it's not just knowledge from afar, it's deep, intimate awareness. He knows their **works**, what they've been doing in faith. He knows the **pressure** they're under, the affliction, the persecution, the constant opposition. He knows their **poverty**, not just financial, but the cost they've paid for following Him.

In the eyes of the world, they had nothing. No wealth. No protection. No status. But Yeshua says, *"You are rich."*

This echoes His teaching in:

Luqas (Luke) 12:21

"So is he who is storing up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward Elohim."

Smyrna was **rich in the things that matter**. Rich in faith. Rich in obedience. Rich in endurance. And heaven saw their treasure, even if the earth did not.

But their persecution didn't just come from pagans or Romans. It also came from **those who claimed to be Yehudim (Jews) but were not**. Yeshua calls this group *"a congregation of Satan."* That's strong language, but it reveals the depth of deception and spiritual warfare they were facing.

Some of this refers to **Replacement Theology**, the idea that the church replaced Israel and that Torah observance is no longer necessary. These were people who claimed to belong to Elohim, but in truth, **they denied Yeshua** and rejected the Torah.

1 Yohanan (1 John) 4:3

“And every spirit that does not confess that יְשֻׁעָה Messiah has come in the flesh is not of Elohim. And this is the spirit of the anti-messiah which you heard is coming and now is already in the world.”

Yohanan (John) 5:46–47

“For if you believed Mosheh, you would have believed Me, since he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how shall you believe My words?”

There were people attacking the believers in Smyrna who **claimed spiritual authority**, but they denied Yeshua's divinity and dismissed the Torah, two signs of what Scripture calls **anti-messiah**.

Some were Jewish by birth, yes, but **not circumcised in heart**. They had the traditions, the feasts, even Yom Kippur... but no real relationship with the Elohim of Avraham, Yitsḥaq, and Ya'aqob.

Romans 2:28–29 helps us understand this:

“For he is not a Yehudi who is so outwardly, neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh, but a Yehudi is he who is so inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in Spirit, not literally, whose praise is not from men but from Elohim.”

Yeshua isn't rebuking all Jews here, far from it. He's warning against those who use religion as a mask, but in reality, fight against the truth. The term “synagogue of Satan” isn't about a physical building; it's about the spiritual identity of a group of people who align themselves with the adversary through deception, pride, or unbelief.

The word “synagogue” simply means an assembly, a group gathered together. So Yeshua is saying: *There's an assembly that claims to belong to Elohim... but in truth, they serve the enemy.*

And this Assembly in Smyrna? They were being **attacked by them**, slandered, falsely accused. But Yeshua knew the truth. And He honoured their endurance.

4. Shortfalls – None Found

When we look at the message Yeshua gave to Smyrna, one thing stands out immediately: **There is no rebuke. No shortfall. No condemnation.**

Among the seven Assemblies in Revelation, only **Smyrna and Philadelphia** receive no correction. That's not a small thing. It's rare. It's precious. It tells us something about the heart of these believers, and the way Yeshua viewed their faith.

Smyrna was under intense pressure. They were persecuted, poor, and slandered. But they didn't compromise. They didn't bend. They didn't leave their first love. They stood firm in the face of fear. And Yeshua had nothing against them.

That's a testimony in itself.

And maybe it's no surprise, then, that Smyrna, the ancient city, is **still standing today**, now called **Izmir** in modern-day Turkey. While other ancient cities have crumbled into dust, Smyrna lives on. And even today, among the hundreds of thousands who live there, **some still believe in Yeshua**. The light never fully went out.

This endurance, both spiritual and physical, reflects the heart of this Assembly. They weren't the largest. They weren't the wealthiest. But they were **faithful**.

And faithfulness matters to YHWH.

This is an encouragement to all of us. You may not have riches, or position, or recognition. You may be pressed on every side. But if you're **faithful**, you are rich in His eyes. And like Smyrna, you'll receive no rebuke, only reward.

5. Corrective Action – Remain Faithful Through the Fire

Unlike the Assembly in Ephesus, which was praised for its doctrine but rebuked for losing its first love, **Smyrna receives no correction**. No warning. No "but I have this against you." Only encouragement.

Why? Because they were already walking the narrow path. They were already in the furnace of affliction. And yet, they held on.

They were **poor in the world's eyes**, but **rich in the Spirit**. They had no temple of marble, no wealth, no political voice, but they had something better: **faithfulness under pressure**. And that's what YHWH honours most.

Yeshua doesn't ask them to change direction or repent. He simply urges them to **stay the course**. And He prepares them with a word that both warns and comforts:

Hazon (Revelation) 2:10

"Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. See, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, in order to try you, and you shall have pressure ten days. Be trustworthy until death, and I shall give you the crown of life."

These are not soft words. Yeshua doesn't sugarcoat the cost. He tells them plainly: *More suffering is coming*. Some of you will be thrown into prison. Some of you will be tested. Some of you will die.

But then comes the promise: *"Be faithful until death, and I shall give you the crown of life."*

This is the **true corrective action** for Smyrna, not a rebuke, but a call to **courage**. A reminder that faithfulness in suffering is never wasted. That every trial endured for the sake of Messiah is storing up treasure in heaven.

Just as Yeshua will later speak to the Assembly in Philadelphia, here too He reassures them: *"I see your struggle. I have not forgotten you. Stand strong, and your reward is secure."*

This is the heart of the message to Smyrna.
Yeshua doesn't promise to remove the fire.
He promises to **walk with them through it**, and to meet them at the end with a crown.

6. The Challenge – Be Faithful Until Death

Hazon (Revelation) 2:10-11a

“Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. See, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, in order to try you, and you shall have pressure ten days. Be trustworthy until death, and I shall give you the crown of life.”

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies.”

Yeshua doesn't soften the truth for Smyrna. He tells them plainly: *Suffering is coming*. But He also says, *“Don't be afraid.”*

The pressure they would face wasn't just random hardship. It was spiritual warfare. The devil himself was behind it, using political systems, religious enemies, and worldly powers to strike at the faithful. And Yeshua says that some of them would be thrown into prison. Some would face death. But none of it would be wasted.

Then He speaks of **“ten days”** of pressure. This isn't just about ten literal 24-hour periods; it's deeper than that. Many believe this number points to a prophetic reality.

Historically, there were **ten successive Roman emperors**, from **Nero in 64 C.E. to Diocletian in 305 C.E.**, who led violent campaigns against Believers. This was the age of lions in the arena, fire in the streets, and crosses lining the roads. It was brutal. And it tested the Assembly to the core.

But the number **10** itself carries rich meaning in Scripture. It appears over 240 times and is connected to **order, judgment, testing, completeness, and a turning point**.

We see its meaning throughout Scripture:

- *Genesis 1* , “Elohim said” appears 10 times in creation, showing divine order.
- *Shemot (Exodus) 7–12* , 10 plagues judge Egypt and bring deliverance.
- *Shemot 20* , 10 Commandments give the foundation of the moral law.
- *Ma'aseh (Acts) 1–10* , The Gospel begins to move beyond Yisra'el after 10 key events.

Even in prophecy:

- *Daniel 7:7, 24*, the 10 horns represent completeness in earthly kingship and rebellion.
- *Hazon (Revelation) 17:12*, again, 10 horns representing final worldly powers.

In all of this, **ten** symbolises a full measure. A completed time of testing. For Smyrna, this “ten days” meant: *The trial will come. But it will not last forever.*

And then, the call:

“Be trustworthy until death, and I shall give you the crown of life.”

Not just *be trustworthy* in easy times. But even **until death**. No matter the cost. No matter the pain. Stay faithful to the end.

And what is the reward?

Not just survival. Not just peace after pain. Yeshua promises the **“crown of life.”**

In Hebrew thought, crowns represent **victory, royalty, and honour**. This is one of the **six heavenly rewards** described in Scripture. The “crown of life” is given to those who endure persecution, remain faithful in suffering, and love Yeshua more than their own lives.

This isn’t a crown made of gold. It’s a crown made of **eternal life**, a testimony that says, *you finished the race. You kept the faith. And now, you live forever with Me.*

Then Yeshua ends with that same call we heard in the first letter:

Hazon (Revelation) 2:11a

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies.”

This is personal. **It’s not just about history.** It’s about you.

Do you hear the Spirit speaking? Do you hear Him calling you to trust, even in trial?

This message isn’t just for the believers of Smyrna in the first century.

It’s for every generation who suffers for Yeshua’s Name.

It’s for all who are tested.

It’s for **you**.

7. Reward – Victory Over the Second Death

Hazon (Revelation) 2:11b

“He who overcomes shall by no means be harmed by the second death.”

This is the final promise to the believers in Smyrna.

Not just a crown. Not just honour.

But **complete deliverance** from the second death.

This is not a casual promise, it’s eternal. It’s the assurance that the one who **overcomes**, the one who remains faithful through suffering, even unto death, will not be touched by the judgment that awaits the wicked.

Yeshua said it plainly in:

Mattithyahu (Matthew) 10:28

“And do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the being. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both being and body in GēHinnom.”

Man can destroy the body. But only Elohim can judge the soul. And the second death, spoken of in *Hazon (Revelation) 20*, is that final judgment. It is the **Lake of Fire**, the place of eternal separation from YHWH.

Revelation 20:14–15 (TS2009)

“And death and the grave were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And if anyone was not found written in the Book of Life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”

The first death is physical. The second death is **spiritual and eternal**. It is final. It is terrifying. And it is reserved for those who reject YHWH’s truth, those who refuse to repent, deny Yeshua, and walk in rebellion.

But for those who overcome...

For those who stay faithful...

For those who hold on, even when everything around them is burning,

The second death has no power.

Yeshua is not just offering survival; He’s offering **eternal life in the presence of Elohim**. No fear. No separation. No judgment. Just peace, in the arms of the Father.

And this reward isn’t for the passive or the lukewarm. It’s not promised to those who merely say they believe. It’s for those who **endure to the end**.

It’s for the Smyrna believer. The faithful one. The one who stands when others fall. The one who dies for Yeshua and yet lives forevermore.

If you want to study more deeply on this topic, especially the spiritual dimension of death and the afterlife, *The Mysterious Spirit World – A Hebraic Perspective* gives deeper insight. It opens our eyes to what “death” really means from YHWH’s point of view, and how **life** isn’t just about breathing, but about **being in His presence forever**.

To overcome is to choose Yeshua, again and again, when it’s hardest.

To overcome is to fear YHWH more than men.

To overcome is to live for the world to come, not the world that’s passing away.

And Yeshua’s final word to Smyrna?

“If you overcome, the second death cannot touch you.”

That’s the victory that cannot be taken away.