

Fifth Letter

Sardis

The Dead Assembly

Hazon (Revelation) 3:1–6

“And to the messenger of the assembly in Sardis write, ‘He who has the seven Spirits of Elohim and the seven stars, says this, “I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete before Elohim. Remember, then, how you have received, and heard. And watch and repent. If, then, you do not wake up, I shall come upon you as a thief, and you shall not know at all what hour I come upon you. Nevertheless, you have a few names in Sardis who have not defiled their garments. And they shall walk with Me in white, because they are worthy. He who overcomes shall be dressed in white robes, and I shall by no means blot out his name from the Book of Life, but I shall confess his name before My Father and before His messengers. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies.”

1- Name of the Assembly – Sardis

Hazon (Revelation) 3:1a

“And to the messenger of the assembly in Sardis write,

Sardis. A city that once shone with wealth and reputation. Known as the “*prince of joy*,” Sardis was the capital of the ancient Lydian kingdom, famous for King Croesus, one of the richest men in history. Its location along major trade routes made it a powerful and prosperous centre. The architecture was grand, the culture was rich, and people lived in luxury.

But behind all that gold... was spiritual rot.

This city wasn’t just rich in trade; it was also rich in idol worship and superstition. Artemis, the Greek goddess of fertility and wild nature, had a massive temple in Sardis. People wore amulets made from Sardis stones, believing they would protect them from evil. Mystery cults, false worship, and sensual rituals were common.

And yet, among this pagan culture, there was also a large Jewish community, so large, in fact, that the synagogue in Sardis was bigger than any synagogue in all Judea. This tells us something: it was a city of religious mixture. Paganism on one side, traditional Jewish life on the other, and somewhere in the middle, a Messianic assembly that was slowly falling asleep.

A Name That Lives, But Is Dead

Yeshua speaks directly and firmly:

“I know your works... that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.” Hazon (Revelation)

What a statement.

This assembly had a name, a reputation, maybe among men, maybe even among other believers. People probably said, “*Sardis? Oh, that's a thriving place. Great worship. Big numbers. Lots of activity.*” But Yeshua sees past all of that. He sees the truth: they were dead on the inside.

They looked alive. But they were no longer awake in the Spirit. Their works were empty. Their zeal had faded. They were coasting on old reputation while their spiritual life was drying up.

This wasn't open rebellion; it was spiritual sleep.
And Yeshua calls them out of it.

Wake Up and Strengthen What Remains

“Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die...” Hazon (Revelation)

There was still a flicker; something remained. But it was faint, fragile, barely holding on. Yeshua gives them a chance to fan the flame. But He also tells them the truth:
“I have not found your works complete before Elohim.” Hazon (Revelation) 3:2

They had started but not finished. They had works, but not complete ones, not the kind that come from a heart alive in the Spirit, grounded in truth, and walking in obedience.

So, He says:

“Remember how you received and heard. Watch. Repent.” Hazon (Revelation) 3:3
Go back to the beginning. Go back to the foundation. Remember the first love. The truth you heard. The way you once walked. Repent, turn back, before it's too late.

Because if they don't wake up?

He warns: *“I shall come upon you as a thief, and you shall not know at all what hour I come. Hazon (Revelation) 3:3.* This isn't the joyful return of the Bridegroom; this is the sudden coming of judgment, unexpected and sharp.

A Faithful Few in White

But even in Sardis, even in the midst of spiritual death, there is hope.

“You have a few names in Sardis who have not defiled their garments. And they shall walk with Me in white, because they are worthy.” Hazon (Revelation) 3:4

Not everyone had given in. There were still some, maybe just a remnant, who stayed pure. Who didn't compromise. Who didn't trade the truth for comfort. And Yeshua says they are worthy. They will walk with Him, clothed in white.

Then comes the promise:

“He who overcomes shall be dressed in white robes, and I shall by no means blot out his name from the Book of Life...” Hazon (Revelation) 3:5

This is serious. The name can be written but also blotted out. The Book of Life is not symbolic; it is real. And Yeshua is clear: To remain in that book, one must overcome.

And what a comfort He gives to the overcomer:

"I shall confess his name before My Father and before His messengers. Mattithyahu (Matthew) 10:32

Imagine that, Yeshua, the King, the Risen One, speaking your name in the courts of Heaven. Not ashamed. Not silent. But boldly declaring you as His own.

Sardis and the Reformation Parallel

The Assembly in Sardis reminds us of the era around 1550 C.E., the time of the Reformation. It was a time when the Church had grown wealthy, powerful, and compromised, much like Sardis. But then, a few voices began to cry out: *"Wake up. Go back to the Word. Return to the truth."*

The Protestant movement rose up, protesting the corruption of the Roman Church. They sought to return to a pure, Scripture-based faith. And while not perfect, the Reformation was a wake-up call, a shaking. Much like Yeshua's call to Sardis.

And today? The same warning rings out. It's easy to look alive. Easy to have the name, the following, the structure, but be dead inside. This message is not for the world. It's for the assemblies. For us. And Yeshua says: *"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies."* *Hazon (Revelation) 3:6*

2- Character Description of Yeshua – He Who Has the Seven Spirits and the Seven Stars

Hazon (Revelation) 3:1b

"And to the messenger of the assembly in Sardis write, 'He who has the seven Spirits of Elohim and the seven stars, says this...'"

Before Yeshua even addresses the Assembly's condition, He introduces Himself, and every word He chooses is intentional. He says He is the One *"who has the seven Spirits of Elohim and the seven stars."* This is not poetry. This is divine identity.

Let's break it down.

The number **seven** in Scripture speaks of **completeness**. Wholeness. Perfection. And when Yeshua says He holds the **seven Spirits of Elohim**, He is referring to the **fullness of the Ruach ha'Qodesh**, the Holy Spirit in all His perfect power and operation.

This isn't saying there are seven separate spirits. Not at all. There is **one Ruach**, just as there is one Elohim. But the Spirit works in many ways, expressing Himself uniquely to each person, each assembly, each situation.

We see this earlier in Revelation: *Hazon (Revelation) 1:4 "...and from the seven Spirits that are before His throne..."*

Hazon (Revelation) 4:5 "...And seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of Elohim."

These lamps, these flames, are a picture of the Spirit's presence. Always burning. Always watching. Always active.

Each of the seven Assemblies in Revelation had different struggles, different strengths, and different needs. And the Ruach ministered to each one accordingly, convicting, encouraging, warning, or comforting, just as they needed. That's how perfect and personal YHWH's Spirit is. He meets each of us exactly where we are.

The number seven reminds us that nothing escapes Elohim's attention. His Spirit is all-present, not just in Sardis, not just in the past, but even now, moving among His people. One Spirit, seven-fold function, working through conviction, wisdom, counsel, might, knowledge, fear of YHWH, and understanding Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 11:2.

And then Yeshua says He also holds the seven stars.

Back in Revelation 1:20, we're told that the seven stars represent the messengers or leaders of the seven assemblies, possibly angels, or human overseers. Either way, they are in His hand. That means He has full authority. He oversees them. He protects. He corrects. He holds them accountable.

Yeshua doesn't just walk among the lampstands; He holds the stars. That's leadership and lordship. The Assemblies do not belong to men. They belong to Him.

This introduction to the letter reminds us of whom we are dealing with.

Not a soft-spoken Rabbi. Not a distant historical figure.

But the Risen King.

The One who holds the fullness of the Spirit...

And the oversight of His Assembly.

He sees all. Knows all.

And He alone has the right to speak, to command, and to correct.

So, when He speaks to Sardis, the Assembly with a reputation of life but the reality of death, He speaks as the One who knows what's truly living and what's truly dead.

His eyes are fire. His Spirit is complete. And His hands hold the leaders, the stars, reminding us that our lives, our assemblies, and our callings are not our own.

3- Recognition – A Few Remain Faithful

Hazon (Revelation) 3:4,

"Nevertheless, you have a few names in Sardis who have not defiled their garments. And they shall walk with Me in white, because they are worthy."

Even in the middle of a dying assembly, even in a city drowning in materialism, idolatry, and spiritual compromise, Yeshua sees the faithful.

He says, *"There are a few among you..."*

That line alone is filled with hope. It means that even in places where most have lost their way, **there is always a remnant.**

These few in Sardis had not defiled their garments. And garments in Scripture, especially white garments, are symbolic of **righteous acts, purity**, and a life committed to YHWH's ways. These believers had kept themselves clean from the spiritual stains of the culture around them. They didn't let the spirit of the city corrupt their walk. They held fast to the truth, even when the assembly around them had fallen asleep.

Yeshua says they are "*worthy.*" Not perfect, but worthy. Why? Because they stayed awake. They stayed loyal. And He promises, "*They shall walk with Me in white.*" That's intimacy. That's fellowship. That's a reward.

This is a reminder to all of us: even if we find ourselves surrounded by compromise, in congregations or cities that have forgotten the ways of YHWH, we **can still stand.** We can still walk in righteousness. We can still keep our garments clean.

4- Shortfalls – Alive in Name, Dead in Spirit

Hazon (Revelation) 3:1

"I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead."

Now this is one of the most sobering lines in all the letters to the seven assemblies. Sardis had a name. A reputation. People likely saw it as a strong, active, influential place. Maybe the worship was exciting. Maybe the building was impressive. Maybe the giving was high. But Yeshua looks past the image and sees the truth.

"You are dead."

That word cuts deep. The assembly looked alive, but the life of the Spirit, the presence of the Ruach, was gone. They had the motions, but not the movement of Elohim. They had the structure, but not the Spirit. They had the programs, but not the presence.

And how easy it is, even today, to fall into that trap. We equate spiritual health with size, with influence, with energy. But Yeshua's standard is different.

He doesn't look at how many people attend.
He looks at how many obey.
He doesn't look at how loud the music is.
He listens for hearts that are humble and broken before Him.
He doesn't count dollars, He weighs devotion.

What Yeshua is truly looking for is life, and life comes from the Ruach ha'Qodesh (Holy Spirit). Without the Spirit breathing into the assembly, everything becomes routine. Everything becomes religious. The shell remains, but the Spirit has left the room.

This is why the works of Sardis were found incomplete before Elohim. It wasn't that they were doing nothing; it's that what they were doing wasn't Spirit-filled. Their deeds weren't

flowing from the Torah, from love, from obedience, from life. They were just... doing. Busy, but not burning.

This kind of spiritual deadness is dangerous because it hides behind activity. It hides behind tradition. It hides behind the name, even a good one.

Yeshua's words to Sardis, and to us, are a warning:
Don't settle for a name. Don't just appear righteous.
Be truly alive. Let the Ruach fill your house again.

And that happens only when we return to the basics:
The Word.
The Torah.
The presence of Elohim.
Discipleship.
And a genuine longing for the return of our King.

If we lose those, we lose the life. And when we lose life, no ceremony, no sermon, no system can save us.

5- Corrective Action – Strengthen What Remains

Hazon (Revelation) 3:2

“Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete before Elohim.”

This is a wake-up call. A cry of urgency from Yeshua to the Assembly in Sardis, a place that looked alive on the outside but was fading fast on the inside. And the words are not soft. They're sharp. They're direct. *“Wake up.”*

This Assembly had drifted into spiritual sleep. They were not watching anymore. They had let their flame burn low. They were walking, but without power. Praying, but without presence. Gathering, but without growth. And Yeshua tells them, *“If you don't rise now, even the little you have left will die.”*

This is not about surface change. It's not about tweaking programs or making cosmetic adjustments. This is about revival from the roots. It's a call to return to purpose. To repent of apathy. To stir up what once burned in them, that first love, that first fire, that first faith.

The way back begins with a deep, honest look at who they have become. Sardis had to examine their worship; was it real? They had to reflect on their teaching, was it sound? They had to question their fruit; was it lasting?

Yeshua says clearly: *“I have not found your works complete before Elohim.”* That means they started well... but they didn't follow through. They had potential, but no perseverance. And so, He urges them to rise, not in the flesh, but in the Ruach.

This revival, if it were to come, would look like this:

They would return to the foundation, the teachings of Scripture, the Living Torah. Not just learning but applying it daily. Walking it out. Living in obedience, not just in theory, but in practice.

They would shift their focus, not on how many attend or how impressive their services look, but on how many are truly becoming disciples. People who know the voice of YHWH, who walk in His ways, who teach others to do the same. Discipleship, not display.

They would become spiritually alert again, watching for the movement of the Ruach ha'Qodesh, not resisting Him. Letting Him guide the assembly. Letting Him convict, inspire, transform.

They would worship with heart and truth, not going through the motions, but meeting YHWH in spirit. Worship that changes you. Worship that costs something. Worship that's real.

And finally, they would live with expectancy, with eyes lifted, waiting and preparing for the return of the King. Sardis had grown sleepy. But those who are awake live differently. They stay ready. They walk as citizens of the Kingdom now, because they know the King is coming soon.

This wasn't just a call for Sardis. It's a call for us. For every assembly, every believer who has lost their edge. Who feels the fire has grown cold. Yeshua is saying:

"There's still something in you. Strengthen what remains. Wake up. Don't let your lamp go out."

Because He hasn't given up.

And if we respond with repentance and faith,
There is still time to rise again.

6- Challenge – Watch and Be Ready

Hazon (Revelation) 3:3

"Remember, then, how you have received, and heard. And watch and repent. If, then, you do not wake up, I shall come upon you as a thief, and you shall not know at all what hour I come upon you."

Yeshua's words here are not just gentle suggestions; they are a warning full of urgency. He calls the assembly at Sardis to do three things: remember, watch, and repent. These are the pillars of spiritual awakening. And if they do not wake up, He says He will come like a thief, suddenly, unexpectedly, and they will not know when.

This is not a message to unbelievers. It's a direct warning to the *assembly*, to believers who have grown spiritually sleepy. They may have the Torah in their mouths, but not in their daily walk. They may quote Scripture, but their garments are stained. Their expectancy is gone.

Yeshua says:

"Remember how you received and heard."

Go back. Remember the moment the truth first stirred your heart. Remember the Word that

first called you out of darkness and into light. Remember how you were once hungry to obey, to seek, to live righteously.

But remembering isn't enough, He says, watch.

This word *watch* means more than looking. It means being spiritually alert, wide-eyed, sober, awake in the Ruach. The people in Sardis weren't watching anymore. They had stopped listening for the trumpet. They weren't looking to the skies. They were going through motions, but the fire was gone.

And so, Yeshua gives the image, "*I will come upon you as a thief.*"

We see this picture repeated throughout the Scriptures. In *Mattithyahu (Matthew) 24:42–44*, Yeshua warns:

"Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Master is coming. And know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched... Because of this, be ready too, for the Son of Adam is coming at an hour when you do not expect Him."

And Sha'ul says in *Tas 'loniqim Aleph (1 Thessalonians) 5:1–5*

"The day of יהה י' comes as a thief in the night... But you, brothers, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief."

Yeshua never meant for His return to take His people by surprise. The world may not see it coming, but we, the sons of light, we should be watching, longing, and ready.

But what has caused Sardis to fall asleep?

They've neglected prophecy. They've stopped studying the Word that speaks of the return of the King. And without that hope burning in their hearts, their faith turned cold.

Yeshua says in *Yohanan (John) 5:39*:

"*You search the Scriptures, because you think you possess everlasting life in them. And these are the ones that bear witness of Me.*"

The Word points to Him, to His first coming, yes, but also to His return. *Romiyim (Romans) 15:4* reminds us:

"*Whatever was written before was written for our instruction, that through endurance and encouragement of the Scriptures we might have the expectation.*"

And *Kěpha Bět (2 Peter) 1:20* says:

"*No prophecy of Scripture came to be of one's own interpretation.*" We are called to seek it, understand it, and live with expectation.

And then we come to this bold word in *Tas'lioniqim Aleph (1 Thessalonians) 5:20:*

“Do not despise prophecies.”

That's exactly what Sardis had done. They despised prophecy not with words, but with indifference. By forgetting. By ignoring. By going through the motions while their hearts wandered far from the hope of His appearing.

This is why Yeshua says **repent**. Turn around. Come back to what matters. Get back to righteousness. Get back to the Torah. Get back to the call to be a holy, set-apart people, a bride prepared for the Bridegroom.

It's not enough to know about the return of Messiah.
We must live like we believe it.

This message isn't just for Sardis. It's for all of us.
Every assembly that has allowed distraction to dull its hearing.
Every believer who's grown tired of watching.
Every heart that once burned hot but now only flickers.

Yeshua is saying:
“Wake up. Strengthen what remains. Watch. Repent. I am coming.”

And when He comes, may He find us **awake**, with oil in our lamps and faith in our steps, ready to meet Him face to face.

7- Reward – White Garments and the Book of Life

Hazon (Revelation) 3:4–6

“Nevertheless, you have a few names in Sardis who have not defiled their garments. And they shall walk with Me in white, because they are worthy. He who overcomes shall be dressed in white robes, and I shall by no means blot out his name from the Book of Life, but I shall confess his name before My Father and before His messengers. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies.”

Even in a spiritually dying assembly like Sardis, Yeshua sees the few who remain faithful, those who have not defiled their garments. These are the ones who have held on to purity while surrounded by compromise. Their garments, still clean, speak of their walk of righteousness. They haven't been swayed by the culture around them. They haven't let their hearts grow cold. And Yeshua says something precious: *“They shall walk with Me in white, because they are worthy.”*

This is not about human perfection. It's about faithfulness. It's about garments that remain unstained by sin because they are continually washed by repentance and continually clothed in obedience.

White garments in Scripture always symbolise purity, holiness, and right-standing before Elohim. We see this again in *Hazon (Revelation) 19:8*:

“And to her it was given to be dressed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the set-apart ones.”

Those who overcome, those who stay faithful in heart and action, will be dressed in white. And Yeshua gives a promise that shakes the foundation of modern Christian assumptions:

“I shall by no means blot out his name from the Book of Life...”

This means the names *can* be blotted out.

The Book of Life is not a static list. It's the register of those who walk in covenant, those who live out their salvation in faith and obedience. It appears again in *Hazon (Revelation) 20:12*, where we read:

“And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before the throne, and books were opened... and another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged from what was written in the books, according to their works.”

This is not a message of fear, but of accountability. What we do matters. Yeshua Himself tells us in *Hazon (Revelation) 22:19*:

“If anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, Elohim shall take away his part from the Book of Life, and out of the set-apart city...”

So, the popular doctrine that teaches “*Once saved, always saved*” stands on shaky ground when we look at Revelation. Yeshua is not just the One who saves; He is also the One who judges, and He warns His people not to fall into complacency.

Salvation is not a one-time handshake. It's a daily walk, a living relationship, proven by our fruit, our obedience, our humility, and our endurance.

And here's the beautiful part:

“I shall confess his name before My Father and before His messengers.”

This is the reward of the faithful. Yeshua, our Intercessor, our Advocate, will stand before the Heavenly Court and say our names. He will vouch for us. He will not be ashamed of us, because we were not ashamed of Him.

As it is written in *Mattithyahu (Matthew) 10:32*:

“Everyone, therefore, who shall confess Me before men, him I shall also confess before My Father who is in the heavens.”

And in *Yohanan Aleph (1 John) 2:1*, we're reminded:

“And if anyone sins, we have an Intercessor with the Father, מֶשֶׁיחַ Messiah, a righteous One.”

But remember, Yeshua is not only the Advocate. He is also the Judge.

Yohanan (John) 5:22 says:

“For the Father judges no one, but has given all the judgment to the Son.”

So, the One who stands for you today... will also stand to judge you one day. And this raises the question for all of us:

Will He still speak your name when you stand before His throne?

This is the challenge Sardis faced, and it is ours as well. To remain awake. To keep our garments clean. To live not in reputation, but in reality, truly alive in the Ruach, rooted in the Torah, and watching for our King.

Let this be the cry of our hearts:

“Yeshua, may I never be found asleep when You return. Keep my name in Your book. Let me walk with You in white.”

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

Dr. Amir Nathanael

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Shalom and Blessings In Yeshua's Name