

Father of 20th Century Messianic Judaism Dies

Victor Smadja was born in French Colonial Tunisia in 1931. At the young age of 16 he lost his father who was taken out of Tunisia and murdered in the Holocaust. Around that same time a brother from England introduced him to the Old and New Testament in French.

After studying and reading the Bible for two years he came to the conclusion that Yeshua (Jesus) is the Messiah. Besides three older sisters in the Lord and his future wife Suzy whom he would meet later in his life, Victor was the only Messianic believing Jew in Tunisia among a sea of Muslims, Jews and Roman Catholics.

After many discussions with Rabbis, Victor decided to immigrate to Israel with the goal of learning Hebrew and to see if Yeshua was really the Jewish Messiah from the Hebrew Perspective.

After returning to Tunisia for a period, Victor and his new wife Suzy moved to Israel in 1956. His vision was to introduce Yeshua the Messiah to the Jewish people. Victor was one of the early Israeli Messianic pioneers who led Israeli believers for many years, even the years when Israeli Messianics numbered only a few dozen. He was persecuted for his faith but remained steadfast in his service bearing much fruit to the glory of God.

Victor was a visionary that worked toward the future and fought for the purity, strengthening and self-sufficiency of the Messianic community in Israel.

For many years, Victor led the young-adult conferences and it was he who established them as essential to the lives many. He also oversaw many children and youth summer camps, led by

Warren and Linda Graham, establishing patterns of operation that still exist today.

He also entrepreneured the first Messianic publishing company in Israel—Dolphin Publishing—and afterward Yanetz Publishing. When an effort to unify the Messianics of Jerusalem was undertaken in the 1960s, Victor was appointed as one of the leaders who eventually accomplished the task of establishing a Messianic Congregation in Jerusalem.

After the establish of this first congregation called Messianic Assembly, he served as one of the pastors of the congregation (though to the knowledge of the writer, he never used that term about himself) until each of the other pastors passed away and he remained the sole pastor. In the ensuing years, Victor also served as overseer of operations at the Beit Yedidiyah (Jedidiah House) in Haifa during the years it was used for as a center for Messianic conferences.

Many Israeli Messianics—several hundred—owe Victor a tremendous debt for laying the cornerstones of the Messianic body in Israel, as well as for leading them to faith. We praise God for him and his efforts over the years. Psalm 116:15 says, “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His godly ones.”

Now he is receiving his heavenly reward and more. As for us, we will never forget his selflessness, his impartation to us and our children, and his lifelong service. Victor leaves behind his beloved wife, three children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

*This article was contributed by one of Victor's sons, **Samuel Smadja**. Samuel is the Owner and President of Sar-El Tours & Conferences, the largest tour company for incoming Christian tours to Israel.*