

MOSHE (MORRIS) BARAN



It is with profound sadness that we announce the passing of Moshe Baran on Saturday, February 3, 2024, a beautiful soul, who not only survived one of the darkest chapters in history but emerged as a beacon of strength, hope, and resilience.

Born in 1920 in the predominantly Jewish town of Horodok, Poland, Moshe Baran was the eldest of four children. In 1941, when Moshe was just 21 years of age, the Nazis stormed through his hometown. A few months after the invasion, the Jews were forced into ghettos, residing in fifteen to twenty homes for hundreds of families. Surrounded by barbed wire fences, guarded by Nazi soldiers, denied access to food, and shut away from the rest of the world, the inhabitants started to hear whispers about the destruction by the Nazis of neighboring communities.

In the spring of 1942, 30 able-bodied men were chosen for various projects and sent to neighboring towns; Moshe was sent to work on the railroads and his brother was sent elsewhere. Just a few months later in July, Moshe's ghetto was liquidated, but luckily Moshe's family escaped and was later reunited at the place he was working. Knowing that when the work was completed, they would be exterminated, they began planning a resistance movement.

Two of Moshe's friends worked in the warehouse sorting captured Russian guns. Moshe and his friend devised a plan to steal gun parts by wrapping them in rags and hiding them in a nearby junkyard. Moshe was able to successfully smuggle gun parts into the ghetto. It was through Moshe's connections that he was able to escape. A woman in the ghetto, who knew the area and the partisans well, led Moshe and his friend to the partisans' encampment with the agreement that they would help her two children escape.

After a week at the encampment, two Jewish Russian soldiers arrived to help organize the resistance. Because Moshe had smuggled guns into the ghetto, he was welcomed into the partisans and was given the name of a local farmer who would help facilitate additional escapes. Moshe was able to successfully plan the escapes of his mother, brother, and one sister. Two days after his mother was freed, the ghetto was destroyed, and Moshe's father and other sister were murdered.

Moshe stayed with his partisan group until 1944, helping with underground activities and recovering weapons dropped from Russian planes. Like many partisans fighting the Nazis, he was eventually drafted into the Soviet Army. Due to his bookkeeping skills, Moshe was assigned to the local battalion office, as the treasurer's assistant, allowing him to stay off of the front lines.

When the war ended, Moshe made his way back to Russia and then to Poland. Connecting with Bricha, the organization responsible for bringing Holocaust survivors to Palestine, he eventually arrived in Austria where he met his future wife Malka in the American Zone. In 1948, Malka, also a Holocaust survivor, left for Israel, but Moshe was unable to follow. A relative who was living in the United States, encouraged Moshe and his surviving family to come to the United States and helped them emigrate.

Moshe eventually married Malka and brought her to the United States from Israel. They originally settled in New York, where they raised two daughters. They moved to Pittsburgh, PA in 1993 to be closer to their daughter, Avi, and her family. Their other daughter, Bella, made aliyah as a teenager and still lives in Israel.

(Above courtesy of the Jewish Partisan Educational Foundation)

When Moshe and Malka moved to Squirrel Hill in 1993, they lived in Maxon Towers at Forbes and Denniston and immediately embedded themselves within the Jewish community. Eventually, Moshe's sister Mina moved into the apartment next door and the three of them became fondly known as "the Sages". They were often found at Beth Shalom, Young People Congregation, the JCC, the Holocaust Center, Community Day School, and up and down Forbes and Murray as they ran errands and spent time with friends and family. They spoke to students and other audiences near and far about their experiences during the Holocaust, with a mission to preserve the memory of the past while paving the way for a better future.

Moshe was well-known for his sense of humor, his close friendships, and his dedication to Judaism and to his family. Until his final days, he was a model of gratitude, joy, and lightheartedness. He loved to laugh, learn, and listen. He loved to tell stories and jokes and was always eager to hear new ones. He never formally learned English, but he grew into an avid reader and writer and loved wordplay and language-based humor. He grew up speaking Yiddish, Hebrew, Polish, and Russian, and he understood German, Ukrainian, and Belarusian.

Malka passed away on May 7, 2007, and Moshe missed her to his last day. He was blessed to live to be 103, independent into his late nineties, and then lovingly cared for by caregiver Ted Goleman and the caring professionals at the Jewish Association on Aging in Pittsburgh.

Moshe was the beloved husband of the late Malka Baran. Son of the late Esther and late Yosef Baran. Loving father of Bella Baran (Amos) Ben Menachem and Avi Baran (Paul) Munro. Brother of Mina Rosenberg, the late Yehoshua (Joshua) Baran, and the late Musia Baran. Cherished grandfather of Yosef (Hannah Jegart) Munro, Boaz (Emily Silverman) Munro, Isaac (Jonah Taylor) Munro, Eliana Munro, Maya (Tal Ben Avi) Baran, and Aviya Baran. Great-grandfather of Florence Malka Munro. Uncle of Sally (Edward) Rosenberg Rosenblatt, Marcia (Benjie) Chankin, the late Rochelle Rosenberg, and the late Michelle Baran.

Services were held at **RALPH SCHUGAR CHAPEL, INC.**, Interment Homewood Cemetery.

Contributions may be made to Community Day School (<https://www.comday.org/>), Congregation Beth Shalom (<https://bethshalompgh.org/>), Holocaust Center of Greater Pittsburgh (<https://hcofpg.org/>), or a charity of your choosing.

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