
Ilana Kirshner

Ilana Kirshner was born Jana Barber in 1931 in Moravska Ostrava, Czechoslovakia, an only daughter to her parents, Gerta and Heinrich. At age six she was sent to a Jewish school, which she attended until it was closed in 1941. In late June 1943 she was sent to the Theresienstadt Ghetto along with her parents. Sixteen months later, in October 1944, Ilana and her mother were deported to Auschwitz. From there, they were transferred to the Mauthausen concentration and labor camp in Austria. Ilana, her mother and aunt, were taken to a nearby town to work in a factory. Due to her young age, Ilana worked within the camp as a shoemaker.

In March 1945 the three women contracted typhus. Ilana's mother did not recover and when the camp was liberated in May 1945 Ilana remained with her mother. About a month and a half after the end of World War II, Ilana's mother died. Ilana returned to Prague, where she met her father who had survived, and together they returned to Ostrava, only to find that her entire family, aside from her maternal grandmother, had been murdered at Treblinka and Auschwitz.

In 1949 Ilana immigrated to Israel where she met Gideon, who had immigrated from Berlin with his family in 1938. They married and in 1950 their daughter Edna was born. After learning Hebrew Ilana worked as a Hebrew, English, and German secretary in industry and lived in Haifa. In 1995 the family moved to Kfar Saba, where Ilana volunteered for twenty years at the National Insurance Institute, the Civilian Consulting Service, and a municipal old age home. In 2013 Ilana was granted the Geller Award for her many years of volunteer work.

Ilana has three grandsons, two great-granddaughters, and two great-grandsons. ■