

ALEXANDER BARASH
1900–1995



It is difficult to write an obituary for a scientist—it is twice as hard if that scientist happens to have been one of your closest friends and colleagues for more than 45 years.

Barash's life reflects that of many Jewish youngsters who fulfilled their dream to escape the "shtetl" and live in Palestine, the Promised Land. Born in Berdichev (Ukraine) in 1900, he studied in Jewish schools (cheder) and later at a high school for commerce.

He arrived in Palestine in 1922 and began as a construction worker. By 1934 he had graduated from a teachers' seminary in Jerusalem and completed a Ph.D. thesis at the University of Berlin. Returning to Palestine, Barash established himself as an expert on invertebrates and taught biology in high schools and teachers' seminaries. His papers were among the first written in Hebrew and served as basic zoological sources for many years.

At that time, Barash's interests took two important turns: First was his devotion to the "Dod Yehoshua" ("Uncle" Yehoshua Margolin) Institute on Yehuda Halevy Street in Tel Aviv, where a group of caged animals, some aquaria, and a small room served to

implant knowledge and love for animals in teachers and high-school students. Barash not only taught there, but as the country's supervisor for biology teaching, he was able to assist the Institute in organizing courses and obtaining financial support. The fruitful cooperation between Dr. H. Mendelssohn, a disciple of Y. Margolin, and Barash provided the impetus for teaching zoology to teachers, and mobilized support for the establishment of the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel. There is no doubt that Barash's enthusiasm at that time, coupled with his position and connections at the Tel Aviv Municipality and the Ministry of Education, helped to establish, between 1951–1953, the University Institute at Abu Kabir, and subsequently Tel Aviv University. Barash was the first teacher of Invertebrate Zoology at the new university, and his enthusiasm never waned. How many scientists can claim to have a record of 60 years of publishing!

The second turning point came at the beginning of the 1950s, when Barash developed a deep interest in Mollusca. In those years, the knowledge of this Israeli marine fauna was very limited and no Hebrew texts were available. Barash, with all his enthusiasm and scientific curiosity, started the collection and study of molluscs. His devotion to teaching and the propagation of scientific Hebrew led him in 1965 to write "A Guide to the Identification of Mollusca"—the first Hebrew scientific text on Israeli Mediterranean molluscs. From this time on, Barash collected, identified, and published numerous studies on these animals, and was considered the authority on Israeli molluscs. He continued to teach, to participate in excursions with students, and to publish Hebrew laboratory manuals and papers on animal biology.

Over the next few years Barash established the Collection of Molluscs at the Zoological Museum of Tel Aviv University and in 1992 he completed his seminal book "Mollusca I — Annotated List of Mediterranean Molluscs of Israel and Sinai," which constitutes a volume in the series *Fauna Palestina* published by the Israel Academy of Science and Humanities.

My close association with Barash began 45 years ago, a friendship that lasted until the end. I will always remember with warmth the long hours that we spent together examining small organisms, or searching with flashlights along the dark seashores, monitoring behavior and reproduction of worms, molluscs, and sea urchins. Barash was the best companion for such escapades—always curious, alert, and excited. This is how I remember him, even up to his last visit to our laboratory—knocking at the door and slowly stepping into the room—"What's new?" he would ask.

I believe that men like Alexander Barash never really die. He is simply no longer around—but remains forever with us in spirit. May he rest in blessed memory.

Lev Fishelson
Department of Zoology
Tel Aviv University