

## **Gratitude for the Journey: The Woven Ones Shabbat**

**Parashat Tzav**

**March 27, 2026**

**Rabbi Evan Traylor, CBE Assistant Rabbi**

Shabbat Shalom! Tonight, I have the honor of introducing our speakers, our member Julie Rosenberg, and her mother-in-law, Hana Berger Moran. But before I invite them to the bimah, I'd like to share a word of Torah, and really a word of thanksgiving and gratitude.

In our Torah this week, Parashat Tzav, the Israelites receive more commands about how to conduct the various sacrifices that they are to make to God. One of them is a sacrifice for thanksgiving, an opportunity to thank God for one's blessings in life. Ibn Ezra, one of our commentators in 12th century Spain, notes that this offering is made if one wants to "give thanks to God for escaping some trouble."<sup>1</sup> Rashi, our commentator from the century before in France, actually spells out the instances in which this kind of sacrifice and blessing would be appropriate. These include those who had travelled in the wilderness, had been kept in prison, or had been sick and were now healed. These are all accounts, Rashi notes, of a "miraculous deliverance."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibn Ezra on Leviticus 7:12

<sup>2</sup> Rashi on Leviticus 7:12

And, these are all accounts in which you, Hana, and so many others during the Holocaust were forced to endure. Six million of our fellow Jews did not survive. And millions of others. And so when we have the ability to hear from someone who lived through that time, who holds those experiences and has lived to tell the tale, it's hard not to be filled with gratitude and, as our Torah instructs, to offer thanksgiving. During this Passover season of miraculous deliverance, I'm so grateful that you made it through the wilderness, through imprisonment, through sickness, to be here in this moment. Thank you for speaking tonight.

Hana Berger Moran, a retired biochemist, polyglot, mother of one, and grandmother of two, was born in a Nazi labor camp in 1945. Her son, Tommy Berger, and his family are members of Congregation Beth Elohim and have been for nearly 20 years. Her daughter-in-law, Julie Z. Rosenberg began asking questions of Hana early on in their relationship, which resulted in a 16-year journey to document her incredible life story, which resulted in the book, *The Woven Ones: A baby born in the ashes of atrocity untangles a web of secrets to find the soldier who saved her life*.

Julie Z. Rosenberg has been a professional wordsmith for more than 25 years, writing for magazines including *Time*, *Fortune*, *Gourmet*, *Parents*, and *People*, as well as *The New York Times*, and BBC.com. In 2018, she embarked on a midlife career change through the NYC Teaching Fellows and is now an English and Special Education teacher at a public high school in Manhattan. She is a longstanding member of Congregation Beth Elohim and lives in Brooklyn with her family.

Thank you for sharing your words with us tonight.