Strategic Plan 2023–2029

CREATING A MORE RESILIENT WORLD

wildernesstorah.org/strategic-plan
THIS IS MY FIRST EXPERIENCE WITH WILDERNESS TORAH...THIS IS THE CONNECTION TO JUDAISM I HAVE BEEN YEARNING FOR!

— Program Participant
ABOUT US
For many of us, the world’s challenges—and our own—can seem to be mounting everywhere we turn. There is disconnect with the self, community, earth, and Spirit.

We’re facing:

- Climate crisis
- Nature-deficit disorder
- Social isolation
- Mental health epidemic
- Lack of safe, authentic community spaces

Judaism arose from an agricultural society closely related to nature’s cycles. Over our Jewish history of repeated exile and trauma, we became increasingly disconnected from our earth-based roots.

**MISSION**
Wilderness Torah promotes healing, belonging, and resilience. We awaken and celebrate earth-based Jewish traditions through inclusive and intergenerational village-building.

**VISION**
A vibrant, resilient world, where humanity remembers how to care for each other and our precious earth.

**HEALING, BELONGING, AND RESILIENCE**

Challenges are mounting everywhere we turn.
WILDERNESS TORAH
ABOUT US

Wilderness Torah is a pioneer and leader in the earth-based Judaism movement—a response to “nature-deficit disorder” and loss of communal village structures that long ago underpinned Jewish life and well-being.

Wilderness Torah began in 2007 to mentor and initiate people to thrive at each life stage; reweave the fabric of resilient village life; cultivate love and stewardship for our precious earth; and reinvigorate Jewish traditions that guide us back into regenerative life ways.

In the last seven years (2016-2022), we’ve served over 11,000 at our festival, community, and youth programs.

Over the next six years, we plan to serve almost 30,000 people in those same core program areas.

Our diverse, intergenerational community members are all ages, all denominations, and hail from all over the United States and across the world.

WHAT IS EARTH-BASED JUDAISM?

Earth-based Judaism is a movement to reinvigorate Jewish traditions that guide us back into regenerative life ways. Earth-based Jewish practices reweave the fabric of resilient, Jewish village life, and inspire and cultivate ethos and action toward the stewardship of our precious earth.

TRANSFORMING JEWISH LIFE

Wilderness Torah fosters vibrant village life that reconnects us to self, community, earth, and Spirit.

In Wilderness Torah’s Village, we learn to live on earth informed by deeply rooted Jewish tradition while seeking and integrating the revelations needed for today.

VILLAGE-BUILDING

We thrive by supporting each other to heal, find our gifts, and serve in community. Youth are mentored to discover their truth; adults are initiated to steward that which is greater than themselves; and elders are honored for their life experience and earned wisdom. The village becomes a context for collaborative leadership, mutuality, celebration, and radical inclusivity.

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WILDERNESS TORAH SERVED OVER 11,000 PEOPLE IN THE PAST SEVEN YEARS (2016-2022). OVER THE NEXT SIX YEARS, WE PLAN TO SERVE ALMOST 30,000 PEOPLE IN THESE PROGRAM AREAS AND OTHERS:

- **9,800** FESTIVALS
- **11,342** COMMUNITY PROGRAMS
- **5,466** YOUTH PROGRAMS

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In the past 15 years, we have demonstrated how an earth-based approach widens the doorway to a meaningful Jewish life while catalyzing a healing and reciprocal relationship with the Earth. This work happens through:

**Cherished, multigenerational community festivals, like Passover in the Desert and Sukkot In-Gathering**

**Youth programs that seed a new generation of leaders; these in-person, mentor-led, nature-based, rite-of-passage experiences set a new standard for regenerative Jewish education**

**Mentoring initiatives**

**Leadership in the field of Jewish Outdoor Food, Farming and Environmental Education (JOFEFEE) and the wider Jewish community**

**CULTURE CHANGE**

We need extraordinary culture change to meet today’s challenges.

Wilderness Torah is committed to honoring the 7-year Shmita (sabbatical) cycle. During the Shmita year, tradition instructs us to rest the land, release debt, and renew ourselves for the next cycle. We took the Shmita year 5782 (2021-2022) to slow down, deeply reflect, and take the next step in our evolution. We developed this strategic planning process aligned with our evolving values:

- Focusing on community
- Embodying the change we envision
- Evolving cultural dynamics to become a more diverse, equitable, inclusive, and just organization and community

We’ve honed our mission, clarified a bold vision, and created potent strategies. Our new theory of change articulates our core values and approaches that help us realize our vision.

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I feel very grateful to Wilderness Torah for helping connect me back to an ancient earth-based form of Judaism which I feel is so relevant for myself and my family. I feel like I’m on a path to reintegrating Jewish tradition and seasonal cycles in my family’s life.

— Yom Kippur participant
THEORY OF CHANGE
INCLUSIVE, INTERGENERATIONAL VILLAGE-BUILDING

The village becomes a context for collaborative leadership, mutuality, celebration, and radical inclusivity.

CULTURE OF INITIATION
We honor, empower, and initiate people at all life stages.

COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP
Centers shared leadership and responsibility for each other and the earth.

MENTORSHIP
We see the inherent gifts in each other and support the growth of our full human potential.

THEORY OF CHANGE

CORE COMPETENCIES
MENTORSHIP
COMMUNITY MOVEMENT-BUILDING

VALUES
HEALING
BELONGING
RESILIENCE

HEALING

WILDERNESS TORAH IS FILLING THE JEWISH NEED FOR ROOTED SPIRITUAL CONNECTION WITH THE EARTH.
— Community Member

WILDERNESS TORAH IS FILLING THE JEWISH NEED FOR ROOTED SPIRITUAL CONNECTION WITH THE EARTH.

There is increased understanding of Judaism’s earth-based roots.
More individuals connect to meaningful Jewish experiences.
Jewish practice and ritual is revitalized.
A network of inclusive and intergenerational villages develops, proliferates, and thrives.
Earth and humanity are in harmonious, sustainable relationship. Our culture is transformed.

A VIBRANT, RESILIENT WORLD, WHERE HUMANITY REMEMBERS HOW TO CARE FOR EACH OTHER AND OUR PRECIOUS EARTH.
Together we will build the Center as a Bay Area hub and national training ground for regenerative Jewish culture, climate change resiliency, and inclusive community.

In collaboration with URJ Camp Newman, Wilderness Torah is realizing its founding vision of launching the Center for Earth-Based Judaism. The Center is a cross-cutting initiative that enhances our ability to host experiential and immersive experiences.
TOGETHER WE ARE BUILDING A LONG-TERM COLLABORATION BASED ON JEWISH VALUES AIMED AT CLIMATE CHANGE RESILIENCY. ...WE BELIEVE THAT WE WILL CREATE A SYNERGISTIC PARTNERSHIP AT CAMP NEWMAN THAT WILL SERVE THE BROADER COMMUNITY MORE POWERFULLY THAN OUR ORGANIZATIONS CAN DO SEPARATELY.

– Ruben Arquilevich
VICE PRESIDENT FOR URJ CAMPS, NFTY AND IMMERSIVES & FORMER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CAMP NEWMAN

### PROGRAM TIMELINE

We will build the Center for Earth-Based Judaism at URJ Camp Newman through permaculture design and hands-on community build workshops. The Center will be home to our regional and national programs.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>2022</th>
<th>2023</th>
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<th>2027</th>
<th>2028</th>
<th>2029</th>
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<td><strong>WORKSHOPS AND HANDS-ON BUILDING</strong></td>
<td>Ongoing building and development with Camp Newman</td>
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<td><strong>HOLIDAYS AND FESTIVALS</strong></td>
<td>Workshops and Hands-On Land Development 2023</td>
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<td>Shavuot In-Gathering 2025</td>
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<td>High Holidays 2024</td>
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<td>Sukkot 2024</td>
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<td><strong>SHABBAT EXPERIENCES</strong></td>
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<td>Shabbaton 2024</td>
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<td><strong>YOUTH AND FAMILY EXPERIENCES</strong></td>
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<td>Family Camp 2025</td>
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<td>B’Naiture 2024</td>
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<td>Wilderness Torah Fellowship 2026</td>
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## STRATEGIES

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<tr>
<th>STRATEGIES</th>
<th>What do we mean?</th>
<th>How will we get there?</th>
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| **STRENGTHEN OUR BAY AREA REGIONAL VILLAGE**   | Our regional Bay Area village is the heart of who we serve. We commit to invest more deeply in village life, showcasing how a locally-rooted, intergenerational community with shared leadership, mentorship, and a culture of initiation can build a more resilient future. | • Provide year-round programs and community support offerings.  
• Embed shared leadership, mentorship, and a culture of initiation across all aspects of village life.  
• Enhance our annual cycle of multigenerational, land-based events.  
• Grow and deepen programming in the Bay Area for youth and families with young children.  
• Grow and deepen local teen programming. |
| **EXPAND OUR REACH AND SCALE THE MOVEMENT OF EARTH-BASED JUDAISM** | We will scale our programs to reach new audiences and pursue opportunities to build and grow the movement of earth-based Judaism nationally.                                                                 | • Leverage partnerships to disseminate successful programs and curricula nationally.  
• Train and initiate other national Jewish leaders into the movement.  
• Increase awareness of earth-based Judaism through content creation and thought leadership. |
| **INTEGRATE SOCIAL JUSTICE AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE THROUGHOUT OUR WORK** | We will embody diversity, equity, inclusivity, and justice (DEIJ) in the work that we do, building a community where all feel seen, respected, and reflected in the leadership. We will work to dismantle white supremacy patterns and culture in our organization and programs. We will work toward solidarity with regional Indigenous communities. We will partner with other communities to steward and protect the future of the earth we all share. | • Invest in our cultural evolution “from the inside out,” embedding diversity, equity, inclusivity, and justice across our culture and operations.  
• Center and create space for Indigenous solidarity.  
• Engage in climate change resilience at the Center for Earth-Based Judaism. |
| **BUILD A STRONG, REGENERATIVE ORGANIZATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE** | We will build the organization’s capacity to deliver on our strategic priorities at a high level, becoming both financially secure and operationally sound, and ensuring we are staffed appropriately at both the lay and professional levels. | • Build a revenue model for long-term financial sustainability.  
• Invest in and evolve our staff and leadership teams.  
• Strengthen and grow our board. |
## TIMELINE & MILESTONES

### REGIONAL VILLAGE PROGRAM TIMELINE: BUILDING THE MOVEMENT OF EARTH-BASED JUDAISM

Our regional Bay Area village is the heart of who we serve.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Milestones</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2022</td>
<td>Existing programs remain ongoing with program growth over time. This includes regular Shabbat activities, festivals and holidays, B’Hootz and B’naiture programs, Neshama Quests, and existing leadership development opportunities.</td>
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<td>2023</td>
<td>Village Angels 2023</td>
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<td>2024</td>
<td>Adult and Elder Initiatory Programs 2024</td>
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<td>2025</td>
<td>Shomrim 2023</td>
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<td>2026</td>
<td>Affinity Groups 2023</td>
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<td>2027</td>
<td>Shared Learning and Partnership with Marginalized Communities 2023</td>
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<td>2028</td>
<td>Young Family Programs and Festival Spaces 2022–2023</td>
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<td>2029</td>
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## GOALS

### GOAL 1

**BUILD THE BAY VILLAGE**

- Launch family programs by 2022 and a family camp by 2024.
- Launch membership model by July 2024.
- Launch programs at the Center by 2024.
- Triple regional program participation by 2029.
- Support our community members in becoming more connected to self, to community, and to nature/earth.
- Grow festival programming into destination events for our regional and national participants.

### GOAL 2

**SCALE THE MOVEMENT**

- Build first national partnership for Neshama Quest by 2023.
- Launch Residential Wilderness Torah Fellowship in 2026.
- Expand Wilderness Torah as a national thought leader in earth-based Judaism.

### GOAL 3

**UPLIFT JUSTICE AND RESILIENCE**

- Implement DEIj and Indigenous solidarity as a major focus of our organization.

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**WILDERNESS TORAH IS REKINDLING THE SPARK IN PEOPLE’S SOULS BY BRINGING THEM TOGETHER, EXCAVATING MEANING FROM JEWISH RITUALS, AND DOING SO BY WEAVING IT ALL TOGETHER WITH NATURE/THE LAND.**

— Community Member
FINANCIALS & STAFFING

Wilderness Torah financial projections for the next seven years are shaped by two core beliefs:

1. Invest in professionalizing our work at a deeper level to ensure a more sustainable operational approach.
2. Our people are the program.

REVENUE

Revenue is derived from both philanthropic support as well as earned revenue. Philanthropic support will include funding from new and current sources. Earned revenue will come from a new membership model and program fees.

INCOME

- EARNED REVENUE
- CONTRIBUTIONS AND GRANTS

EXPENSES

- OPERATIONS
- DIRECT PROGRAM EXPENSES
- PERSONNEL: SALARIES, BENEFITS, TAXES

FINANCIALS & STAFFING

EARNED REVENUE

CONTRIBUTIONS AND GRANTS

INCOME

EXPENSES

OPERATIONS

DIRECT PROGRAM EXPENSES

PERSONNEL: SALARIES, BENEFITS, TAXES

EXECUTIVE TEAM

RABBI AND CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Responsible for new program development, curriculum development, spiritual offerings, and thought leadership. Serves as spiritual leader and mentors new clergy and the Village Angels. Works in collaboration with Executive Team.

DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND OPERATIONS

Responsible for finance, operations, and organizational culture. Works in collaboration with Executive Team.

PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Responsible for program development and implementation, collaborating closely with Creative Director. Works in collaboration with Executive Team.

DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT

Responsible for fundraising and organizational development. Works in collaboration with Executive Team.

NEW PROGRAM STAFFING

2023
- Director of Finance and Operations
- Community Programs Manager
- Indigenous Solidarity Coordinator
- Development Associate
- Community Programs Coordinator
- Adult Initiatory Program Manager

2024
- Program Director
- Clergy/Spiritual Leader
- Center Program Manager
- Neshama Quest Program Manager
- Community Programs Manager

2025
- Director of Partnerships/ National Initiatives
- Youth Program Manager
- Grants/Sponsorship Coordinator
JOIN THE VILLAGE, BUILD THE MOVEMENT

What would a more resilient world look like, where humanity remembers how to care for earth and each other?

We need your help to get there. The deepening of this work requires everyone. Through mentorship, community, and movement-building, we all have unique strengths and gifts to contribute. We honor, empower, and initiate people at all life stages—so we can all play a meaningful role in creating a more resilient world.

WILL YOU JOIN US?

Your support, gifts, and involvement are crucial. Thank you for all that you’ve already done. We look forward to partnering with you.

Visit wildernesstorah.org/strategic-plan to learn more and email info@wildernesstorah.org to start the conversation.

Contribute to the future: wildernesstorah.org/donate

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THESE ARE OUR ADVISORY TEAM for leading the way

THESE ARE OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS for steering the process towards the future

THESE ARE OUR STRATEGIC PARTNERS for your thoughtful input

THESE ARE OUR STAFF for your invaluable feedback and soulful work every day

THESE ARE OUR COMMUNITY for your participation at the town hall and your constant support

THESE ARE OUR STAKEHOLDERS for investing your time in building a brighter future

THESE ARE OUR FUNDERS who contributed directly to this process: The Fred Isaac Fund and Jared Gellert

THESE ARE THIRD PLATEAU for guiding us in a thorough and methodical process

THIS IS HOW WE WE’RE MEANT TO LIVE: IN COMMUNITY, IN PRAYER, IN HARMONY WITH NATURE. IN A WORLD WHERE WE’VE WANDERED TOO FAR FROM OUR ROOTS, I’M GRATEFUL TO WILDERNESS TORAH FOR PROVIDING A PATHWAY HOME.

- Passover in the Desert participant

GRATITUDE

We extend our deepest gratitude to everyone who has contributed to this strategic planning process.

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info@wildernesstorah.org

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אָםְתָּה מְאָרֶם הַצָּמֵח
Truth will sprout from the earth.
PSALM 85:12

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