

August 2024

# Rite of Passage Year

A Clear Path Emerging

Devoted to creating a culture of initiation, Wilderness Torah embarked on its own rite of passage this year. As we prepare for the reflective season of Elul and a new Jewish year, a clear path ahead is coming into focus and we look forward to partnering with you to keep our community strong.

## New Beginnings: Renewing the Spirit of Wilderness Torah

With excitement for the path ahead, we announce the following strategic updates:

### Merger to Strengthen Our Village

Wilderness Torah is aiming to merge with a mission-aligned partner that will help us stabilize, build our capacity, and expand our community impact. Merging with a well resourced organization will enable us to grow youth programs and return to offering immersive, village-building experiences. At the same time, this will also open up new opportunities to help us gain financial strength, alleviate staffing challenges, and secure our foundation for the next generation of leaders.

### Thriving Programs from Youth to Elders

Wilderness Torah's youth programs are thriving! Through B'hootz, B'naiture, Shomrim, and Neshama Quest, we are growing our village with youth work that continues to transform lives. Through a merger, we are exploring how to scale these award-winning programs regionally and beyond the Bay Area. Our new From Older to Elder program, led by community elders Ellie Schindelman and Jerry Falek, is growing our elder community and setting a new standard in the Jewish world for uplifting this life stage. From Older to Elder quickly sold out, reflecting the power of the intergenerational village, a key pillar of the Wilderness Torah vision for our world.

### Emergent Holiday Festivals

Wilderness Torah paused festival production for the sake of discovering a more financially viable way to serve our community. This year we experiment with emergent partnerships to carry the festival torch and discover a more regenerative community-building model—supporting a new generation of community leaders who share Wilderness Torah's village-building mission. Stay tuned for exciting announcements about a Sukkot festival and a new Rain Dance model!

### Leadership Transition

Itamar Cohn is now our Interim Executive Director. Under his leadership Youth Programs have flourished and expanded and over the past year, Itamar has helped shepherd Wilderness Torah into readiness for merger and new horizons.

We sadly bid farewell to Robbie Friedman, with profound gratitude, who as the Senior Director of Marketing & Operations worked tirelessly to poise Wilderness Torah for a new level of resiliency.

Rabbi Zelig Golden is now the Senior Strategic Advisor, supporting development, strategy, and the pathway to a new organizational home.