

Reconstructionist Learning Networks



JOURNEY ■ IMAGINE ■ CREATE

2017-2018 CATALOGUE



RECONSTRUCTIONIST LEARNING NETWORKS

Welcome to Reconstructionist Learning Networks



“Our path forward may be constantly evolving. With open hearts and solid foundations, Reconstructionist Jews will continue to embrace the challenges of the future.

Let’s journey together!”

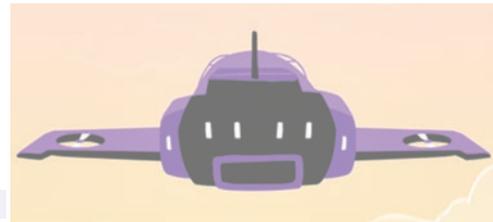
Rabbi Deborah Waxman, Ph.D., President
Reconstructionist Rabbinical College and Jewish Reconstructionist Communities

**For the questions of Jewish life that can’t be Googled.
Join a network**

Reconstructionist Learning Networks connect you with people across geography and perspectives. Explore the crucial questions of Jewish life that just can’t be Googled, and that matter most to you and your community.

Networks are sponsored by Jewish Reconstructionist Communities in association with the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College and the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association.

Let’s journey together to build a more just and joyous world.



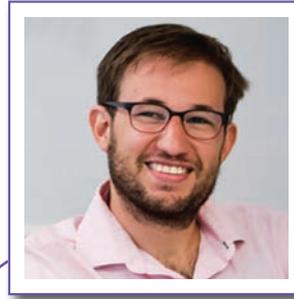
These images are excerpted from the RRC/Jewish Reconstructionist Communities 2017 Annual Report video, “Let’s Journey Together,” viewable at letsjourneytogether.rrc.edu.

More than 260 people registered for Reconstructionist Learning Networks in 2016-2017.

This is what some of them said:

“I have continued
to **learn, and
problem solve**
with people I met in the
Learning Network.”

— Lay Leader



“I always feel so
energized after
these network meetings.
The facilitator has so much
knowledge and experience.”

— Lay Leader



“I became more aware
of how others
might look at life
and its opportunities.”

— Educator

“I thought the Learning Network was
terrific;
the presenters were excellent,
the technology worked well.”

— Rabbi

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Collaborate with experts, including Jewish Reconstructionist Communities staff and Reconstructionist Rabbinical College faculty. Facilitators work with you to set agendas, bring expertise and foster learning among colleagues. Explore case studies, text studies, resource materials, and real-life challenges and solutions. Experiment and troubleshoot together.

Networks meet three to six times a year online for about an hour each session.

Do you have an additional idea for a network?

We'd love to hear from you. New Learning Networks will be added in the spring based on interest. Check the website and Reconstructionist newsletters for updates. Submit your ideas to:

learningnetworks@rrc.edu



Register at www.JewishRecon.org/Networks

Your engagement is crucial to the success of the Learning Networks.

Requirements

You will need access to a computer with a camera and an Internet connection. The video-networking platform we use fosters connections by making it easy for participants to interact with one another.

Technical support is available.

Cost

Networks are free for members of the Reconstructionist movement. Members of the movement include: members and staff of affiliated congregations and *havurot*, RRA members, RENA members and direct contributors. To keep networks accessible to all, donations are welcomed at: www.jewishrecon.org/networks.

Non-members are asked to pay a minimum of \$36. No one will be turned away due to an inability to pay.

More than
**82% of participants
said they took a new action**
based on their participation.



Check www.jewishrecon.org/networks for more information,
call 215-576-0800
or email:
learningnetworks@rrc.edu.

Continue the conversation!
Join Reconstructionist Learning Networks
on Facebook at
<https://tinyurl.com/facebook-networks>.

Innovation and Growth Networks

What does continuing to reconstruct Judaism in our communities look like?

Facilitated by Rabbi Deborah Waxman, Ph.D., President of Reconstructionist Rabbinical College and Jewish Reconstructionist Communities

For Reconstructionist clergy, lay leaders and educators

Tuesdays, 3:30 p.m.-4:30 p.m. Eastern time — Nov. 7, Nov. 21, Dec. 5, Dec. 19, 2017

Communities across our movement are studying the principles of how we reconstruct Judaism. Mordecai Kaplan taught that every generation is obliged to reconstruct Judaism. Join us to explore the big ideas that sustain our communities and the ones that require renewed reconstructing. As communities that are evolving, how do we benefit from our past and plan for the future through a Reconstructionist lens? This network will explore case studies that uncover successes and unanswered questions. The experience and interests of participants will help drive our exploration. As a network, we will determine what is urgent to explore from such topics as *halachah*, God



language, accessibility, critique of process, balance between individual autonomy and community, and/or continuity. Together we will reconstruct for tomorrow.

Can you hear me now? How can we harness the power of word of mouth?

Facilitated by Rachael Burgess, Major Gifts Officer at RRC/
Jewish Reconstructionist Communities

For lay leaders, clergy and communicators

**Wednesdays, 8 p.m.-9 p.m. Eastern time — Oct. 18, Nov. 1,
Nov. 15, Nov. 29**

How many times have you tried a restaurant, watched a movie or made a purchase based on the recommendation of a friend or family member? In this network, participants will explore best practices on how word-of-mouth marketing works in our communities. More specifically, this network delves into questions such as how do we identify, target and reach our niche audiences? How do we connect with the “influencers” who will help us get done what we are looking to do? Participants can expect to discover strategies for encouraging their community members to help spread the word. Join our Reconstructionist Marketing Facebook group: www.Facebook.com/groups/can-youhearmenowRLN



How can Reconstructionist communities market their best selves?

Facilitated by Rachael Burgess, Major Gifts Officer at RRC/
Jewish Reconstructionist Communities

For lay leaders, clergy and communicators

**Tuesdays, 8 p.m.-9 p.m. Eastern time — April 10, April 24,
May 8, May 22**

When a prospective member walks through the doors of your community do you find yourself answering the question: “What is Reconstructionist Judaism?” In this network, participants will define their community’s Unique Selling Proposition (USP). You’ll discover ways to demonstrate and articulate how Reconstructionist values and ideas power your community culture. Join our Reconstructionist Marketing Facebook group: www.facebook.com/groups/canyouhearmenowRLN



How do I grow and sustain my new project/ community?

Facilitated by Cyd Weissman, Assistant Vice President for Innovation and Impact at RRC/Jewish Reconstructionist Communities

For leaders who have started a new community, *havurah* or project

Thursdays, 2 p.m.-3 p.m. Eastern time — Nov. 9, Dec. 14, Jan. 11, Feb. 8, March 8

If you've already taken the leap and launched an innovative new project or new community, you now may be asking, "What's next?" The hard work of moving an idea to action doesn't have to be done alone. We'll share what we've learned and what challenged us in the early start-up phase. Together we'll identify best practices to develop an advisory committee or board, test a business model, experiment with a program, get feedback and build commitment. When needed, we'll call on experts to guide next steps. Project sustainability is possible. Share your story, support your colleagues and learn new strategies. Grants are available to support participants.

How can we grow fund development in our large congregations?

Facilitated by Josh Peskin, Vice President for Strategic Advancement at RRC/Jewish Reconstructionist Communities

For clergy, presidents and development chairpersons of larger congregations

Wednesdays, 1 p.m.-2 p.m. Eastern time — Jan. 31, Feb. 14, Feb. 28, March 14

This network on fund development is geared towards larger congregations (more than 175-member households). Together we'll build a best-practice set for fund development in congregations in our movement. We will explore questions such as: Do we launch a campaign every year? How do similar-sized congregations choose to solicit? How do we gather data? What are some innovative ways to bridge our annual budget gap? The network will feature an interactive component around imagining ourselves as the advisers of a new large congregation and brainstorming about how to go about fundraising. Guest presenters such as Cantor Chayim Frenkel of Kehillat Israel will join network sessions.



“I really enjoyed the
insights of colleagues,

knowing that we are all
journeying on the same road,
in different cities.”

— Rabbi

How do network/COP (Community of Practice) leaders have the greatest impact in the Jewish community?

Facilitated by Cyd Weissman, Assistant Vice President for Innovation and Impact at RRC/Jewish Reconstructionist Communities

For leaders in the Jewish community responsible for a network/COP strategy

**Wednesdays, 1 p.m.-2:15 p.m. Eastern time — Oct. 26,
Dec. 13, Feb. 21, April 18, May 23**

Networks and COPs are fast becoming a strategy employed across the Jewish community to connect and engage people in meaningful ways. Leaders overseeing these strategies are generally guided by best practices, yet many still have questions. Together we'll uncover the answers to questions like: How do we create a culture of generosity? What are the best ways to amplify learning from groups? How can you measure impact? Participants will help set agendas and learn from each other's wisdom. We will “write the book” of best practices for Jewish community network builders.

Education and Administration Networks

Executive directors do it all . . . How can they do it even better?

Facilitated by Rabbi Amber Powers, Executive Vice President of RRC/Jewish Reconstructionist Communities

For executive directors

Wednesdays, 3 p.m.-4 p.m. Eastern time — Nov. 1; additional dates to be selected with participants

Successful synagogue executive directors navigate a wide range of issues and challenges, sometimes all within a single week or day. Connect with colleagues to share best practices and troubleshooting tips related to financial management, governance, human resources, facilities and more. We will work with you to set an agenda that is useful and relevant to your work.



How can Jewish stories help families live Jewish values?

Facilitated by Lisa Litman, Director of PJ Goes to School, and Sarah Ruderman Wilensky, PJ Goes to School Educator

For up to 20 educators, or parents of children in kindergarten through second grade

Wednesdays, noon-1 p.m. Eastern time — Sept. 27, Nov. 29, Jan. 24, March 21

Educators and parents across movements will identify best practices for making Jewish stories come to life in order to live the values inherent in them. Families are the backbone of Jewish life. Torah teaches that families are varied in makeup and none are perfect, yet we dedicate ourselves to the covenantal promise to care for and respect one another. Four children's books, curricula and online resources will be sent to you through a generous scholarship of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation's PJ Goes to School. The books that will be provided are *Oy, Vey!*; *Life in a Shoe*; *Rebecca's Journey Home*; *Chicken Soup, Chicken Soup*; *Mrs. Katz and Tush*.

What does reconstructing Jewish education for our evolving civilization look like?

Facilitated by Dr. Jeffrey Schein, Senior Consultant for Jewish Education at the Kaplan Center for Jewish Peoplehood, and Sue Penn, Director of Congregational Learning at University Synagogue

For clergy, educators and lay leaders interested in exploring contemporary Reconstructionist Jewish education

Tuesdays, 1:30 p.m.-3:15 p.m. Eastern time — Jan. 9, Jan. 16, Jan. 23, Jan. 30, Feb. 6, Feb. 13

We will explore an in-depth reconsideration of Mordecai Kaplan's vision of Jewish education. Undoubtedly, a great many of Kaplan's insights still inform and inspire. We will survey the contemporary landscape of Jewish education for vibrant centers of innovation, including learning from insights and experiences of the network participants. We will also "name" the unmet challenges of Jewish education today in order to direct future work.

Participants are invited to meet at the Jewish Reconstructionist Communities National Convention from November 15-18, 2018, where we will tackle questions generated in this network with the "modest" goal of generating a set of design principles for the Reconstructionist Jewish education of today and tomorrow.



This network is co-sponsored by the Jewish Reconstructionist Communities (JRC), Reconstructionist Educators of North America (RENA), the Kaplan Center for Jewish Peoplehood and the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association (RRA).



Spirituality and Justice Networks

How do we live an integrated approach to our spiritual lives and the work of social justice?

Facilitated by Rabbi Shawn Zevit, Mishkan Shalom, Co-chair of the Clergy Caucus of POWER Interfaith, Co-director of The Davvenen' Leadership Training Institute, Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association (RRA) representative to the Philadelphia Religious Leaders' Council

Wednesdays, noon-1:15 p.m. Eastern time — Oct. 25, Nov. 1, Nov. 15, Nov. 29

This network will focus on aspects of weaving together the work of *tikkun olam* and one's spiritual life. From a Jewish perspective, we are always called to *tikkun* in the times of our lives. Our current times have brought with them an intensified level of challenge in the realm of social, environmental, economic and racial justice. We will explore Jewish perspectives, spiritual approaches and best practices of our day to live the deep call to *tikkun hanefesh v'olam*—the repair/balancing/integration of one's own soul and the



world we are part of. Whether your focus is on mindfulness meditation, prayer and ritual, community organizing, marches or lobbying, will work on the integrative Jewish approach to a healthy and balanced life and a more just, equitable and sustainable world. Additional resources: <https://www.jewishrecon.org/act/doing-justice/tikkun-olam>

How do fair-trade principles provide a roadmap to integrate these values into our community life?

Facilitated by Ilana Schatz, founding director of Fair Trade Judaica

For congregational leaders, *Tikkun Olam* committee members and seminarians/rabbinical students

Mondays, 1 p.m.-2 p.m. Eastern time — Oct. 23, Nov. 6, Jan. 8, March 5

How can we translate Jewish values of human dignity, self-sufficiency and environmental sustainability into community or congregational life? In this Learning Network, we will explore how fair trade provides an ethical framework for consumer choices within a Jewish values context. We will explore the principles of fair trade and engage in Jewish text study related to those principles. As a group, we will brainstorm a variety of ways to increase the awareness of fair trade, integrate fair trade into our holiday celebrations (specifically *Chanukah* and Passover) and what it would mean to become a Fair Trade Community/Synagogue.

What do we need to consider when planning a morning service?

Facilitated by Rabbi Margot Stein, Liturgical Specialist at RRC
For current and future lay leaders

Wednesdays, 2 p.m.-3 p.m. Eastern time — April 11, April 25, May 9

Becoming a skilled leader of public prayer, or *shaliach tzibur*, is an art that can be learned and cultivated. We begin by understanding the structure of the service and its purpose; we consider the creative expressions of other Reconstructionists; and we learn to draw upon our individual and personal strengths to create a communal experience that is enlivening and satisfying. What do you already know, and how can we build from there? For those who wish, we will apply our newfound skills to leading a weekday *Shacharit* service in person at Reconstructionist Communities National Convention in November 2018.



How do our organizations go beyond inclusion?

Facilitated by Elsie Stern, Ph.D., Vice President for Academic Affairs at RRC

For lay and professional leaders engaged in shaping the culture of their organizations

Mondays, 2:30 p.m.-3:30 p.m. Eastern time — Jan. 29, Feb. 12, Feb. 26

We are privileged to be part of the vibrantly diverse Jewish people. Many communities work hard to ensure they are welcoming and inclusive of contemporary Jews in all their diversity. Yet our embrace of Jewish diversity need not stop at inclusion and welcome. We will explore how we, as professionals and lay leaders, can create and practice forms of Judaism that are reflective of, and responsive to, the experiences of everyone.

We will explore how life-cycle rituals can provide opportunities to honor and express a wide range of Jewish identities and experiences. Case studies will help us identify how current forms of rituals can serve as barriers and invitations for diverse Jews. We will brainstorm ways to use these rituals to help a wide range of Jews contribute their unique voices and experiences to the Torah and rituals we share.

How can “Dual Narrative” resources on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict help educators work with this challenging topic?

Facilitated by Rabbi Maurice Harris, Associate Director of Affiliate Support at RRC/Jewish Reconstructionist Communities

For educators, education directors and clergy

Wednesdays, 3 p.m.-4 p.m. Eastern time — Jan. 17, Jan. 31, Feb. 14, March 7

Holding educational programs on the topic of Israel/Palestine can be a minefield, and so we tend to avoid it. A new approach to the subject, called “Dual Narrative,” can help. The Dual Narrative approach, developed collaboratively by Israeli and Palestinian scholars, starts by acknowledging major disagreements over the historical facts and then presents the two conflicting narratives side by side. It helps arouse empathy for all parties to the conflict, and it supports civil discourse and respectful disagreement. Rabbi Harris will offer strategies for using Dual Narrative, including concrete examples, and together we’ll discuss possible program formats for some of the communities we serve.



Presidents' and Leadership Forums

To lead in a changing world, we need, as Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan indicated, to exchange ideas and experiences. Presidents' and Leadership Forums enable lay leaders to explore the challenges and solutions of leading Reconstructionist congregations and *havurot*.

Presidents and other leaders within Reconstructionist congregations and *havurot* are invited to join a Leadership Forum based on size or location. Meetings will take place online and in person, when geography allows. Leaders will work closely with Jewish Reconstructionist Community staff to set agendas, share materials, connect with each other and learn best practices. Led by the Affiliate Support team at Jewish Reconstructionist Communities, these meetings will explore pressing and common questions, including:

- How do we create different kinds of communities of meaning?
- How do we balance individual and collective needs and responsibilities within our communities?
- How do we harness tensions to grow from them?
- How do our communities support groundbreaking ideas while being grounded in tradition?

Look for an invitation with more information about your Presidents' and Leadership Forum or for more information, visit: [jewishrecon.org/presidents-leadership-forum](https://www.jewishrecon.org/presidents-leadership-forum).



“The RRC/JRC Regional President’s Forum **has enriched my consideration of common, community issues and opportunities,** and has provided an occasion **to spend productive time with lovely, thoughtful people pursuing similar goals.”**

— Robert Weintraub, President, Bet Am Shalom

CONVENTION

**November 15-18, 2018, at the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel
in Center City, Philadelphia**

- Join with other Reconstructionists to sing, pray, learn, eat and be together
- Strengthen our networks and deepen our connections
- Celebrate the movement and the 50th anniversary of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College

**For more information, see:
jewishrecon.org/convention.**



Evolve: Groundbreaking Jewish Conversations

For Interested RRA Members

Evolve is a two-year endeavor that aims to engage Reconstructionist thinking about key questions with the ever-evolving circumstances of the 21st-century Jewish community. Last year, we conducted interviews with members of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association to explore urgent questions they are addressing with the people they serve. We then surveyed the entire RRA membership. Seven key questions emerged. Individual RRA members have written essays exploring these questions.

This year, each of these essays will be posted online, and interested RRA members are invited to join two-session network conversations about each question. The comments of participants will be excerpted and also posted online. In addition, participants are invited to write and submit differing perspectives, as well as related program materials.



Seven Groundbreaking Conversations

1. Making the Case to Live a Jewish Life — Rabbi Nick Renner.

How does living Jewishly make a person's life better/richer/more meaningful/spiritual?

2. Constructing Jewish Identity — Rabbi Jane Litman.

Following from our rejection of chosenness and embrace of pluralism, how can we address the emerging formulations of Jewish identity?

3. Uniquely Mending the World as Jews — Rabbi Alex

Weissman. What underlies our commitment to social justice as a centerpiece of Jewish living, and why is it Jewish to fight injustice that does not affect Jews?

4. Discussing Israel/Palestine Effectively — Rabbi

Toba Spitzer. How do we cultivate civil conversation and compassionate listening within communities?

5. Embracing Judaism and Race — rabbinical students

Sandra Lawson and Donna Cephas. Given that Ashkenazi Jews in North America have enjoyed increasing degrees of white privilege since World War II, how do we transform the definition of Jewish identity to include Jews of color? And what do Jews of color need Jewish communities to look like?

6. Harnessing Technology — Rabbi Deborah Waxman, Ph.D.,

and rabbinical student Nathan Kamesar. How do we create and enrich community in an age of technology?

7. Re-Imagining Synagogues and Communities — Rabbi

Rachel Weiss. What might the 21st-century synagogue look like?



Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association (RRA)



The Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association (RRA) is committed to supporting its members' continued professional growth through a variety of educational programs and opportunities for collegial exchange.

Mini-Conferences

This year the RRA will offer regional, topic-specific, two-day intensives that are open to all members.

Racial Justice and the Rabbinic Role

Nov. 19-20, 2017; Atlanta

We will learn about the intractable nature of racism in America, both generally and within the Jewish community, and focus on our roles as rabbis in confronting issues of race, exclusion, bias, etc. Atlanta, with its deep history steeped in the civil-rights struggle, will serve as our background and give us the opportunity to visit the National Center for Civil and Human Rights.

Substance Abuse, Addiction and Recovery

Jan. 21-22, 2018; Los Angeles

This two-day workshop is offered by the Elaine Breslow Institute of Beit T'Shuvah, America's only Jewish residential treatment program for addiction and recovery. We will explore Beit T'shuvah's philosophy of the human condition, and how addiction in its various manifestations is a symptom of an internal spiritual and mental split. We will look at how we, as spiritual leaders, can be both present for the communities we serve and attend to our own brokenness.

Outdoor Experiential Learning in the Delaware Water Gap

May 6-8, 2018; Hardwick Township, N.J.

Led by our own outdoor adventurers James Greene, Greg Hersh, Howard Cohen and others, we will spend two nights in the beautiful woods of the Delaware Water Gap at the Mohican Outdoor Center. We will hike, canoe, pray, eat and learn about Jewish outdoor education with colleagues and friends. Housing will be in semi-private cabins.

Conversations Among Colleagues

Cohorts Groups

The RRA facilitates ongoing groups for colleagues in similar roles or professional stages.

- Campus rabbis
- Chaplaincy cohort
- Academics
- JCC clergy
- Congregational rabbis, 15-years plus
- Recent graduates
- Rabbis in transition
- Brushing up on the basics
- Retirement planning, practical and emotional
- Staff supervision, situational leadership
- Resume refresher
- Budgeting 101
- Time management

RRA Israel Conversations

Dialogues between two RRA members with differing views about Israel will model respectful discussion and increase our organizational capacity to listen to one another across differences.

Community Organizing Training

Join for Justice (www.joinforjustice.org) and the RRA have partnered to offer a special RRA section for their seven-week online training program, “**Don’t Kvetch. Organize.**”

Additional programs and learning opportunities will be added throughout the year. For more information or to suggest other topics, contact Rabbi Elisa Goldberg, Director of the Office of Rabbinic Career Development, at: egoldberg@therra.org.

Our networks are a learning laboratory for uncovering pathways to a more just and joyous world.

I am continually inspired by network participants who journey, imagine and create together.

Sign up today. Bring your curiosity and your wisdom. Together, explore the questions of Jewish life that can't be Googled.

*Cyd Weissman,
Assistant Vice President for Innovation and Impact*

Meet the Reconstructionist Learning Networks Facilitators



Rachael Burgess

Major Gifts Officer,
Reconstructionist Rabbinical
College and Jewish
Reconstructionist Communities



Rabbi Maurice Harris

Associate Director of Affiliate
Support, Reconstructionist
Rabbinical College and Jewish
Reconstructionist Communities



Lisa Litman

Director, PJ Goes to School,
Harold Grinspoon
Foundation



Sue Penn

Director of Congregational
Learning at University
Synagogue



Josh Peskin, Ph.D.

Vice President for Strategic
Advancement, Reconstructionist
Rabbinical College and Jewish
Reconstructionist Communities



Abigail Pogrebin

Well-known American author
of several books, including
My Jewish Year: 18 Holidays,
One Wondering Jew



Rabbi Amber Powers

Executive Vice President,
Reconstructionist
Rabbinical College and
Jewish Reconstructionist
Communities



Ilana Schatz

Founding director of
Fair Trade Judaica



Dr. Jeffrey Schein
Senior Consultant for
Jewish Education at the
Kaplan Center for
Jewish Peoplehood



Rabbi Jacob Staub, Ph.D.
Professor of Jewish Philosophy and
Spirituality, Director, Jewish Spiritual
Direction Program, Director, Evolve:
Groundbreaking Jewish Conversations



Rabbi Margot Stein
Liturgical Specialist,
Reconstructionist Rabbinical
College and Jewish
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Elsie Stern, Ph.D.
Vice President for Academic
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Rabbi Deborah Waxman, Ph.D.
President, Reconstructionist
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Sarah Ruderman Wilensky
Educator, PJ Goes to School,
Harold Grinspoon Foundation



Rabbi Shawn Zevit
Rabbi, Mishkan Shalom,
Co-chair of the clergy Caucus of
POWER Interfaith, Co-director of
The Davvenen' Leadership Training
Institute, Reconstructionist
Rabbinical Association (RRA)
representative to the Philadelphia
Religious Leaders' Council



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JOURNEY • IMAGINE • CREATE

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WWW.JEWISHRECON.ORG/NETWORKS