

Posted on January 21, 2010 - by [admin](#)

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By Harriet P. Gross

There's always a collection in my inbox: items too interesting to ignore and too good to delete, but not long enough, important enough, relevant enough or immediate enough to stand alone in a column. So today, I'm giving a taste of a half-dozen.

1) The Betsy, a 70-year-old Miami Beach hotel that has been remade into a five-star beauty, reopened to accolades last spring. But not just because of its new look, its food and its amenities — all of which have been most warmly received. Betsy is also on the cutting edge of something new: It has created the position of vice president for philanthropy. Filling this post is Dr. Deborah Briggs, whose work will be to build the Betsy's business while making the world a better place, according to the hotel's ownership. Hope we'll have a one-year report soon on how everything is working out.

2) In a related vein: Jewish Causes of Choice, Inc., a nonprofit out of Needham, Mass., recently inserted itself into today's social network with the launch of [jchoice.org](#), "designed to foster the next generation of Jewish giving among adolescents." It teaches philanthropy by showcasing causes and providing an online community where young people can interact with those causes and each other. Founder David Rosenberg says an in-depth study has proved that "young donors want involvement ... to understand the impact of their activism, and to be able to dialogue with their peers regarding charitable choices."

3) Naropa University, an accredited Boulder, Colo. institution of higher learning named for a mystic monk who died in the year 1041, has a proud history of holding interfaith events. Its most recent interreligious dialogue was called "Spiritual Practice and Social Engagement," and featured Jamgon Mipham Rinpoche, a Shambhala Buddhist; Father Thomas Keating, a teacher in the contemplative Christian tradition; and Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, a leading proponent of Chassidism and Kabbalah.

4) Eshet Chayil may be the first all-Jewish-girls' band anywhere playing all-Jewish music; its three Israeli members perform songs that bring Biblical words forward into our time with what they call a blend of spirituality, tradition, rhythm and choreography. The trio's first album was released in November; one of its songs, "Brighten Our Eyes," promptly hit the top of the Israeli charts. Their music videos feature Hebrew lyrics, some very fast patter, lots of variety in clothing

and hair styles, plus bright lights and much percussion in the background. Find them on YouTube, if you like.

5) Puah, the organization named for a Biblical (Exodus) midwife and billing itself as “your global resource for fertility and women’s health issues,” has issued its first online newsletter, aptly named Conceptions. In 2009, Puah — with headquarters in both Jerusalem and Brooklyn — was named the top-rated international Jewish nonprofit. It provides Continuing Medical Education (CME) credits in courses that cover combinations of professional and halachic learning, and was represented by its founding director, Rabbi Menachem Burstein, on the Knesset commission that drafted legislation governing human egg donation in Israel.

6) University of Manchester, England, scholar Dr. Renate Smithuis has discovered a 150-word fragment of a Jewish exorcism ceremony, most likely from 18th-century Palestine or Egypt. With it, Joseph Moses Ben Sarah tries to rid the widow Qamar Bat Rahma, whom he had either recently married or was about to marry, of a dybbuk — the evil spirit of her late husband Nissim Ben Bunya. This fragment is one of more than 11,000 rescued from a thousand-year-old Genizah at Cairo’s Ben Ezra synagogue; since 2006, the university has been cataloguing them, and will have at least 22,000 high-resolution images available for research and public viewing when the project is complete. This one is “not a story, but a record of a real event ... a prayer said in a synagogue in the presence of a minyan,” according to Dr. Smithuis. It is ascribed to Shalom Shar’abi, a prominent Kabbalist rabbi of the time.

The Internet nets some odd and amazing tidbits, doesn’t it? Treasures, all.

Now, here are two important dates to treasure: Last Monday, we honored the memory of slain civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. And before we meet here in this space again, we will have observed next Thursday as International Holocaust Remembrance Day, which this year marks the 65th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. The Internet yields serious learning as well as fun facts, so use your computer to bring information on both these historic dates and events onto your desk — or your lap.

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