



"Hello! My (Grandparent) Name Is..."

by Rabbi Miriam Cotzin Burg

Editorial Consultant: Margie Bogdanow

Editor: Terry S. Kaye

Designer: Winter & Winter Design Associates

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Class Overview

In this class, participants reflect on their relationships with their own grandparents and think about what kind of relationships they hope to have with their grandchildren. Using a combination of conversation, text study, and reflective writing, participants consider what grandparent name best reflects who they are, especially as they enter this new stage of life and their role in the family changes.

Class Purpose

This class is designed to help adult participants navigate the transition into a new stage of life: grandparenting. We hope they will find it substantive and joyful, serious and silly — an opportunity to learn about themselves while addressing a practical question: What do I want my grandparent name to be?

Class Goals

Participants will:

- Reflect on the relationships they had with their own grandparents (or other close elders in their lives) and think about the kind of relationships they want to have with their grandchildren.
- Choose a grandparent name (or a few options) that feels true to them while also recognizing that they might need to be flexible.
- Consider how to have a conversation with their adult children about the transition to grandparenthood, specifically about their new grandparent name.

Who Is the Class For?

The class is ideal for expectant grandparents who are in the midst of a changing family dynamic. People who are already grandparents and might want to rename themselves with more intention — or even just explore their current name — would also enjoy the class.

Enduring Understanding

Our grandparent names say something important about who we are, how we want our family to see us, and how we imagine our relationship with our grandchild will be.

Logistics and Class Structure

Facilitator	Anyone who is experienced in leading a group through an educational experience and who is comfortable teaching some classical Jewish texts (with guiding questions)
Class	90 minutes
Setup	The class can take place in a room with movable chairs set in a circle or virtually on Zoom.
Materials	Pens/Pencils Markers Whiteboard or Post-it-style flip chart and markers "Hello! My name is..." tags or stickers Copies of handouts: 1. "Storytelling: My Grandparents and Me" 2. "Personality Traits" 3. "We've Got Personality" 4. "Naming Our Future: From Our Sources" Note: If you are meeting on Zoom, email the handouts in advance and share them on-screen during the session.

A note about timing: Expectant and new grandparents might like to spend more time connecting and schmoozing with one another. You might consider a two-session course, rather than one class. For example, Parts 1, 2, and 3 could be included in the first session, with a take-home task that reflects on the discussion, while Parts 4, 5, and 6 are covered in the second session.

Part 1: My Story (20 minutes)

Ask participants to very briefly introduce themselves. Then invite them to share memories of their own grandparents or another close family elder. For example, they may recall cooking for the holidays together, staying over at their grandparents' homes, or singing around the dining-room table.

Distribute Handout #1, "Storytelling: My Grandparents and Me," or write the questions from the handout on a whiteboard or flip-chart Post-it notes for everyone to read. If you are doing the program virtually on Zoom, post the questions in the chat. As a group, have participants discuss one or more of the questions, depending on the number of participants and the amount of time you have:

- When you think about your grandparents (or other close family elders), what images/memories/stories come to mind?
- What is a memorable experience you shared with your grandparents?
- What did you and your grandparents enjoy doing together?
- How do you remember feeling when you were with your grandparents? What did they do that elicited those feelings?

Together, assess common themes that arise; for example, sensory memories of food, smells, and sounds, or how different leisure time was back then.

Then, do one or both of the following activities:

1. Distribute Handout #2, "Personality Traits," from <https://www.berkeleywellbeing.com/personality-traits.html>. Ask participants to circle the traits that they associate with any of their grandparents (or close family elders). Invite them to share that person's name and one of the traits they circled (no explanation necessary). AND/OR
2. Ask participants to choose a title for one of the memory stories they shared (encourage funny titles!).

Part 2: Exploring Possibilities (15 minutes)

Begin by asking participants to share what names they called their grandparents. Write all the names on a whiteboard or flip chart (or in the chat) so everyone can see them. Next, ask participants to add to the list any additional names they know, perhaps from their own friends, or have heard. Create a long list (you might add a few funny — real — ones such as Glama, CoolPop, Gramcracker, Grandiva, and GrandDude).

Ask participants to identify 2–4 names that stand out to them — because they have a strong like or dislike, the names are surprising or intriguing, or the names feel familiar and comfortable. Distribute Handout #3, “We’ve Got Personality.” Instruct participants to write down individually what descriptive characteristics they associate with each name, using Handout #2, “Personality Traits,” if it is helpful.

You may wish to share that there are hundreds of different grandparent names. Numerous GaGas, Mimis, and PaPas got their names because these are the ways their grandchildren said them — and the names stuck. One grandparent said, “One grandchild calls me Gimmie and the other two call me GrammyP.” We even know of a Nana Banana!

Note: You may wish to invite participants to join the private Jewish Grandparents Network Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/JewishGrandparentsNetwork>. There they can find lots of great discussion about grandparent names.

Part 3: Naming As a Form of Prophecy (20 minutes)

Distribute Handout #4, “Naming Our Future: From Our Sources.” Introduce the story from the Torah in which God names God’s self at the burning bush, and guide participants through it.

Ask and answer: What does “Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh” mean? In Hebrew, there is no word for the verb “to be” in the present tense — only the past and the future. *Ehyeh* means “I will be.” The name God chooses in this moment is “I will be what I will be” or “I will be what I will become.”

Explain: This moment in the Torah is forward facing. We might call the act of naming a form of prophecy — it is about looking ahead to who you want to become and giving yourself a name that reflects the future you want to make for yourself; for example, “We want our grandchildren to associate us with sweetness and for our time together to always be a special treat, so we are going to be ‘Lolly’ and ‘Pop!’”