

Jewish Naming Customs Q & A

About Jewish Naming Customs

Q: Can Ashkenazi Jews name a child after a living relative?

A: It has become an Ashkenazi custom to name a new baby after a relative that has passed away. This keeps the name and memory alive, and in a metaphysical way forms a bond between the soul of the baby and the deceased relative. However, it is by no means forbidden to give a child the same name as a living relative. The living relative should be asked permission.

Q: Can Sephardi Jews name a child after a living relative?

A: The Sephardic tradition is to name new babies after living relatives (based on Talmud Shabbat 134a).

Q: Should we consider our parents wishes when choosing a name for our child?

A: In such matters a person does not have to consider his parents' wish, if he opposes it strongly and has good reason to object - (source: "Code of Jewish Law" Y.D. 240:25).

Q: My sibling already named a child after my grandmother. Can we "share" the honor of naming him after my grandmother, or do we need to pick another name.

A: You can definitely name after the grandmother, even though others may have already honored her memory by doing so. This is a great honor to the deceased, because its soul can achieve an

elevation based on the good deeds of the namesake. The child, meanwhile, can be inspired by the good qualities of the deceased -- and make a deep connection to the past.

Q: I am an adult who was never given a Jewish name. Can I give myself a Jewish name?

A: Yes. The new name can be established by friends calling you and referring to you as such, for at least thirty days - (source: "Code of Jewish Law" E.H. 129: "Bet Shmuel" 33 there; "Igrot Moshe" by R' M. Feinstein, E.H. IV 104).