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## Supplemental Discussion: Genealogy and Family Histories

Genealogy is a path that we can trace. In doing so, we learn about ourselves and contemplate the future. Here are some suggested questions to help you facilitate a conversation about family histories and genealogy.

### Tracing Origins Through Names:

1. What was the name of the oldest ancestor your family remembers? What do you know about him or her? What do you think about the idea that a person lives as long as people remember his or her name?
2. What are some of the origins of your names — are they biblical? Cultural? Geographical? How does your surname reflect your family's journey through places and times?
3. Did any of your ancestors change their names? How and why?

### Geographical Journeys:

1. Jewish genealogists say that after surnames, the second most important piece of information for doing Jewish genealogical research are the names of the towns from where your family came. Do you know the names of the towns in your family history? What did you hear about them? Have you ever travelled to them?
2. Many of our immigrant ancestors (grandparents, great grandparents), when asked about their family history, often told us that they “didn’t want to talk about it.” Also children and grandchildren of Holocaust survivors often get the same response. Why don’t they want to talk about their past? What do you think of that choice?
3. How did major events in modern Jewish history affect the migrations of your ancestors?

### Family Trees:

1. Our names can serve as a way of preserving the memory and history of those who came before us. Do you have any names that are from your family tree?
2. Do you have a Hebrew name? What is it? Do you like it? Does it feel like your name? Why or why not?
3. Oral historians advise that when you are interviewing a person for family history, the questions you ask should not be “yes or no” questions. The questions should prompt a story or a lot of information. What are some good questions to ask an older relative?