

# The Amen Effect: Ancient Wisdom to Mend our Broken Hearts and World

## Chapter 1 Show Up

### 1. Threshold Moments

**Purpose:** *Mark the transition from daily life to sacred encounter.*

- Greet people with soft music, low lighting, and a visual centerpiece a photo of your loved ones on a table next to a lit candle.
- Opening prayer: *Let us pray; God of Presence, help us to see each other as You see us. May we hold space for each other with reverence. We ask this in your holy name. Amen*

### 2. Sacred Sparks

**Purpose:** *Create curiosity and open hearts.*

- Pose this provocative question.
  - *Rabbi Brous opens the book by describing the power of showing up for others in moments of vulnerability. How does this challenge or affirm your understanding of what it means to build a compassionate community?*
- Have people whip around the circle with their answers.

### 3. Chambers of the Spirit

**Purpose:** *Share lived faith experiences in sacred listening circle.*

Invite everyone to share the answer to one or more questions.

1. Describe a time when, like Rabbi Sharon Brous, you knew it was not your place to tell someone how they should feel. How did you respond instead?
2. Rabbi Brous speaks of “scary houses.” What makes a space—your home, room, or another place—feel heavy or unsettling to you?
3. The image of people walking in a circle of prayer—embracing one who is moving in the opposite direction—is powerful. Right now, do you feel you are moving with the current of your community, or against it? Why?

4. If you feel like you're walking against the current, what's your story? What makes your heart ache? How might we better see, hear, and accompany someone else who feels this way?
5. Rabbi Brous identifies as an Ashkenazi Jew, rooted in a specific cultural and ancestral history. In what ways does your own heritage—or homeland—shed light on the struggles or hopes you face today?
6. IKAR is a spiritual community centered on justice, inclusion, and vibrant faith. If we were to imagine a Catholic version of IKAR, what qualities or practices would you want it to have?
7. What is one piece of good news, hope, or joy that you can share with the group today to help “fill the well” for others?
8. Rabbi Brous asks: “How can we understand a mourner’s prayer that lavishly praises God while sidestepping grief, love, and loss?” How do you respond to that question? Does it challenge or affirm your own experience of prayer?
9. Brous says what matters most is a grieving person standing in prayer and being met with love. Can the Catholic Church offer space for such public expressions of grief? If so, how and where? If not, what might need to change?
10. Rabbi Yonah of Girona and Saint Francis both taught that our highest mission is to serve others. Where do you feel called to serve right now?
11. Brous insists, “We should not mourn alone.” Do you? What helps—or hinders—you from allowing others into your mourning?

#### **4. Intentional Sending**

**Purpose:** *Leave inspired and committed to live the faith.*

- Use a ritual action:
  - Relight the candle
  - Invite everyone to share the one word or phrase they would like to take into the next week/month (depending how often you are meeting).
- Close with a prayer of sending.

You changed my mourning into dancing; you took off my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness. *Psalms 30:12*