

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

Chapter 7 Bear With-ness

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 compassion, You are Emmanuel—God with us. Teach us to be present with one another in love and patience. Help us to walk beside those who grieve, to sit with those who suffer, and to bear the weight of sorrow together. May we become signs of Your presence in the world. Amen.*

2. Sacred Sparks

Purpose: *Create curiosity and open hearts.*

- Pose this provocative question.
- Rabbi Brous points out that Jacob, in Genesis 32, shows great *hutzpah* when he wrestles with the angel and demands a blessing. When have you shown that kind of boldness or spiritual courage—taking a risk, speaking up, or asking for something sacred or important? What gave you the strength to do so?
- 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. Rabbi Brous shares that she does not believe in a God who makes us suffer just so we can learn life lessons. Do you believe that suffering is necessary for growth? Why or why not?
2. After every struggle, Rabbi Brous writes, we have the opportunity to orient ourselves toward the blessings. Has that been true in your life? Can you recall a time when something good eventually emerged from hardship?
3. In a story from this chapter, Rabbi Brous describes a young girl dancing in the dark who realizes that while she is surrounded by darkness, she herself

is the light. Have you ever had a moment like that—when you realized you were a source of light in a dark time?

4. The book says, “Our work, then, is to decipher the blessings, even in the midst of darkness.” Have you ever been able to find blessing or meaning during a painful or uncertain time? How?
5. Rabbi Brous poses a powerful question: “How much are you willing to go through to have a shot at being alive—and what level of being alive is tolerable to you?” How would you respond to that question?
6. She also refers to being caught in “the chorus of false hope”—a time when well-meaning people offer reassurance that doesn’t ring true. Have you ever found yourself in that role, or been on the receiving end of it? What did you learn?
7. Marcelo, a collogue, said, “We don’t need to offer the perfect mix of wisdom, consolation, and inspiration. We just need to show up and make space for something holy to flow through us.” Have you ever been part of that kind of presence—for someone else, or has someone offered it to you?
8. Rabbi Brous reflects on a moment when she gave a technical answer to someone who really needed empathy. Can you recall a time when someone showed you deep empathy? What did they do, and how did it affect you?
9. Finally, Rabbi Yohanan comes to understand that he cannot take away his friend’s pain, but he *can* sit with him in the dark. Have you ever been present with someone in their darkest moments—or has someone done that for you? What did that experience teach you?

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... Blessing for the Bearers of With-ness. May you have the courage to sit with what is uncomfortable. May your presence be a healing balm. May you remember: You don’t need to have the answers. You are enough. And may you know that God is near—bearing with us all. Amen.