



Book of Faith Bible Study Amos 5:24

Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

What would it look like if justice were to roll down like waters accompanied by an ever-flowing stream of righteousness? The eighth century prophets, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah and our author, Amos were concerned primarily with “inviting” the ten northern tribes of Israel back into communion with the two southern tribes, Judah and Benjamin, and with their God, Yahweh. While the history of this epic separation of brothers become tribes is rich and nuanced, it can be told quite simply. The northern tribes of Israel left the brotherhood after the death of Solomon and worshiped in the wrong place with rituals regarded as unseemly by the two southern tribes, together called Judah. The treatment of the poor and disenfranchised was a key issue; the southerners accused the northerners of abandoning their shared core value of equality before one another based in their equality before Yahweh.

Poverty and landlessness were conditions that never should have come to exist in ancient Israel and Judah. The laws and customs described in Leviticus and Deuteronomy prohibited the accumulation of land in such a way as to impoverish a fellow son or daughter of Abraham and Sarah. Regular land reform was a part of the religious landscape. Ideally the forgiveness or debts (or do you say sins?) was an integral part of life in community. A man could sell of his birthright, but not that of his grandchildren. Another man could accumulate the land of his neighbors, but his grandchildren would have to return it to the descendents of those who had sold it. The land, a visible sign of God’s presence and promise, was a trust from God for the sake of all Israel and Judah. It could not be held in such a way as to permanently deprive any family of its plot.

As you consider opening Scripture individually or with others, you may wish to consider these general questions:

How does the Bible feed your daily life?

How does the Bible feed the life of this community?

How are we renewed, empowered, and enlivened by the Word?

What stands in the way of our opening the Bible and joining the conversation?





It seems that the ideal proposed by the writers of the Hebrew Bible was one in which everyone was guaranteed the right to share in God's amazing grace in both its spiritual and physical manifestations. There was to be room for all in the assembly of God's elect, not only for those who managed their affairs wisely and certainly not only to the descendents of those who managed their affairs wisely. If God's justice were to roll down like waters and God's righteousness like an ever-flowing stream, there would be space and place enough for everyone. Sometimes we act as if we believe that God's imputed righteousness and God's justification of creation through Christ has limits. I think Amos suggests otherwise. God's justice flows inextricably from God's love, endless, limitless and flowing uncontrollably like waters raging toward us to restore us to wholeness. We are invited back into oneness with God and with one another. Let's seize the opportunity to be one in God's imputed justice and righteousness.

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In addition to questions found in the studies, here are general questions that can be used for each of the texts:

What is God saying to us through this passage?

What does this passage tell us about God?

How does this passage speak to us as individuals and to us as a community?

What does this passage teach us about our neighbors and our world?

Questions on Amos 5:24

- *Amos spoke to real people who lived in a very particular time in history. How does the history of Amos' time relate to our time, and what difference does knowing this history make to how we read this passage?*
- *How do you think about justice and faith? Justice and righteousness?*
- *Does God's justice and righteousness have limits?*

