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April 23rd: Numbers 20 & Mark 14:26-52

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Miriam and Aaron die and Moses is judged for striking the rock. Strike the shepherd.

Some passages referenced:

Leviticus 14 (the law of cleansing the leper); Hosea 4:16, 10:11 (Israel as heifer); Exodus 15:22-26, 17:1-7 (the water crises at Marah and at Massah and Meribah); Exodus 2:1-10 (Moses drawn out of the water); Deuteronomy 3:26, Psalm 106:32-33, Numbers 27:12-14, Deuteronomy 32:50-51 (later reflections on Moses' sin at Meribah); Numbers 11:21-23 (Moses' doubt about the Lord's provision of food); Exodus 23:20 (led by the angel); Numbers 35:32 (high priest dying, releasing those in the cities of refuge); Numbers 19:2-4 (Eleazar's involvement in the ashes of red heifer).

Psalms 113-114, 115-118 (psalms before and after the Passover meal); Zechariah 13:7 (strike the shepherd); 2 Samuel 20:9-10 (betrayal with a kiss); Isaiah 53:12 (numbered among the transgressors); Amos 2:16 (the man fleeing naked); Mark 13:15-16 (the man leaving his cloak behind in the field); Mark 13:33-37 (the necessity of wakefulness).

Reflections upon the readings from the ACNA Book of Common Prayer (<http://bcp2019.anglicanchurch.net/>).

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Transcript

Numbers 20 should die here, both we and our cattle? And why have you made us come up out of Egypt to bring us to this evil place? It is no place for grain or figs or vines or pomegranates, and there is no water to drink.' Then Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the entrance of the tent of meeting, and fell on their faces. And the glory of the Lord appeared to them. And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Take the staff, and assemble the congregation, you and Aaron your brother, and tell the rock before their eyes to yield its water.

So you shall bring water out of the rock for them, and give drink to the congregation and their cattle. And Moses took the staff from before the Lord as he commanded him. Then Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock, and he said to them, Hear now you rebels, shall we bring water for you out of this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock with his staff twice.

And water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank and their livestock. And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, Because you did not believe in me, to uphold me as holy in the eyes of the people of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them. These are the waters of Meribah, where the people of Israel quarreled with the Lord, and through them he showed himself holy.

Moses sent messengers from Kadesh to the king of Edom. Thus says your brother Israel, You know all the hardship that we have met, how our fathers went down to Egypt, and we lived in Egypt a long time. And the Egyptians dealt harshly with us and our fathers.

And when we cried to the Lord he heard our voice and sent an angel and brought us out of Egypt. And here we are in Kadesh, a city on the edge of your territory. Please let us pass through your land.

We will not pass through field or vineyard or drink water from a well. We will go along the king's highway. We will not turn aside to the right hand or to the left until we have passed through your territory.

But Edom said to him, You shall not pass through, lest I come out with the sword against you. And the people of Israel said to him, We will go up by the highway, and if we drink of your water, I and my livestock, then I will pay for it. Let me only pass through on foot, nothing more.

But he said, You shall not pass through. And Edom came out against them with a large army and with a strong force. Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his territory.

So Israel turned away from him. And they journeyed from Kadesh, and the people of Israel, the whole congregation, came to Mount Hor. And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron at Mount Hor, on the border of the land of Edom, Let Aaron be gathered to his

people, for he shall not enter the land that I have given to the people of Israel, because you rebelled against my command at the waters of Meribah.

Take Aaron and Eliezer his son, and bring them up to Mount Hor, and strip Aaron of his garments, and put them on Eliezer his son. And Aaron shall be gathered to his people, and shall die there. Moses did as the Lord commanded.

And they went up Mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation. And Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them on Eliezer his son. And Aaron died there on the top of the mountain.

Then Moses and Eliezer came down from the mountain. And when all the congregation saw that Aaron had perished, all the house of Israel wept for Aaron thirty days. Reading Numbers chapter 20 we may not initially appreciate that about 38 years has passed since the preceding narrative sections of the book.

Almost an entire generation has perished in the intervening period. The first event that we read of after all this time passes then is the death of Miriam. Miriam was present from the very beginning of the Exodus narrative when Moses was drawn from the water.

She was singing after the crossing of the Red Sea and she has been a leading figure in Israel to this point. And now she dies. Numbers chapter 20 comes after the law of the Red Heather in chapter 19, which is one of the more perplexing chapters in the book.

It contains a law for cleansing involving the ashes of a red heather placed in water. And this water is supposed to be used to cleanse those who have had contact with a dead body. The heather has to be clean but it is slaughtered outside of the camp.

There's cedar wood and hyssop and scarlet yarn involved which may be connected with the law of the leprous person in Leviticus chapter 14 where those same elements are found. It seems to me that these recall elements also of the Passover. The cedar wood connects with the doorpost and the lintel.

The scarlet yarn with the blood. The hyssop with the hyssop dipped into the blood. Leprous and corpse defiled persons are being brought back into the realm of life after being kept outside of the camp and there's a sort of replaying of the Exodus theme here which I think accounts for those particular elements.

In being burnt up outside of the camp and reduced to its ashes the red heather is brought down to the dust and the ashes or the dust of this red heather are the means by which the corpse defiled persons can be let back in. What does the red heather itself represent? It might be connected with life. The redness connected with blood and the earth, the redness of the earth.

It may be connected with the procreative power of the female of the species. It's a

heather. It's not a bull and it might represent Israel as well which I think is one of the most important associations.

Hosea chapter 4 verse 16 and 10 verse 11 both make such an association. Those who administer this right are defiled by it which seems to be very strange for a purification right. All of chapter 19 seems very odd.

It seems to be an unusual law that's very arbitrary and strange but it seems to me that as with the rest of numbers law and narrative belong together and they comment upon each other and the more that you think about the relationship between the two the more that the narrative makes sense and the more that the law makes sense. So what is this law doing here? It seems to me that the law is the ritual expression of the death of the Exodus generation in the wilderness. We've had all these intervening years, 38 years between the rebellion of Korah and the death of Miriam and in that period of time almost all of the old generation has died out and in this chapter Miriam dies, Aaron dies and Moses is told that he will die before he enters into the land and so I think we can start to see the connection.

The death of the red heather, the death of Israel outside of the camp in the wilderness, its ashes will be the means by which added to the living water Israel will enter into the promised land. The deaths of Miriam, Aaron and Moses then are not just the ends of their lives. They're the beginning of something new.

They affect a transition in the same way as the ashes of the red heather allow with the water the person to be cleansed and to enter back into the camp so Israel, cleansed by the death of these leaders, will be able to make the transition from the realm outside of the camp, being in the wilderness, into the promised land. Immediately after Miriam's death there was a water crisis. There were previously water crises in Exodus chapter 15 and 17 at Marah and then at Massah and Meribah.

This place will be named Meribah too, connecting it with that earlier location even though it is a different place. Miriam in her story is connected with the provision of water from Exodus chapter 2 onwards. She's the one who's present as Moses is delivered out of the water and she is the one who provides her mother as a wet nurse for Moses, someone from whom he can have drink.

Water for Israel is provided after they are delivered from the Red Sea and there are a number of plays upon Miriam's name at that point too. The way that the water is cut off immediately after Miriam's death again creates an association that many people have commented upon. As the people complain about this crisis the Lord appears to Moses and Aaron and instructs them to take the staff and to speak to the rock and it will yield its water.

However Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly and Moses says to them, here now

you rebels shall we bring water for you out of this rock? He then strikes the rock twice and plentiful water comes out for all of them and their cattle. The Lord however judged Moses for not believing in him and not upholding him as holy in the eyes of the people and the consequence could not be more severe. He is told that he would not lead them into the land as a result.

Why such a serious punishment? What did Moses do wrong? Why was it so wrong? Why was he instructed for instance to bring the rod if he wasn't supposed to use it? And I think there are some help to be found in later passages that reflect upon these events. In Deuteronomy chapter 3 verse 26 where Moses pleads with the Lord to be allowed into the land we're told, but the Lord was angry with me because of you and would not listen to me. In Psalm 106 verse 32 to 33 they angered him at the waters of Meribah and it went ill with Moses on their account for they made his spirit bitter and he spoke rashly with his lips.

In Numbers 27 verses 12 to 14 the Lord said to Moses go up into this mountain of the Barim and see the land that I have given to the people of Israel. When you have seen it you also shall be gathered to your people as your brother Aaron was because you rebelled against my word in the wilderness of Zin when the congregation quarreled failing to uphold me as holy at the waters before their eyes. These are the waters of Meribah of Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin.

In Deuteronomy chapter 32 verses 50 to 51 and die on the mountain which you go up and be gathered to your people as Aaron your brother died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his people because you broke faith with me in the midst of the people of Israel at the waters of Meribah Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin and because you did not treat me as holy in the midst of the people of Israel. Reading these different verses I think we can pick up a number of elements of Moses' sin. Moses' action was provoked by anger at the people and was a sin of speech.

He broke faith with the Lord not believing in him. He rebelled against the Lord's Word not following his instruction. He didn't treat the Lord as holy and the Lord was also angry with him on account of the people.

So breaking this down I think we can get a clearer picture. First of all Moses lost his temper and he spoke inappropriately. This was provoked by anger with the people.

Shall we bring water for you? It suggests that it was them not the Lord that was doing this and it makes it about him and Aaron versus the people. It's not about the Lord. The Lord is removed from this picture.

Second he failed to trust the Lord. The doubt in his statement perhaps. Shall we? In Numbers chapter 11 verses 21 to 23 we see a similar note of doubt in Moses' voice.

But Moses said the people among whom I am number 600,000 on foot and you have said I will give them meat that they may eat a whole month. Shall flocks and herds be slaughtered for them and be enough for them or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them and be enough for them? And the Lord said to Moses is the Lord's hand shortened? Now you shall see whether my word will come true for you or not. In Numbers chapter 20 Moses expressed his doubt in the Lord's Word before all the people and he hit the rock twice which is perhaps an expression of his doubt.

Speaking just does not seem to be enough for such a great miracle. Hitting is more likely to work. Hitting is what worked the last time and twice just for good measure because once probably wasn't sufficient.

This is an expression of his failure to believe and to follow what God had told him. God had told him that he would bring water out of the rock. Why didn't he trust him? Third he rebelled against the Lord's Word.

Specifically he's told to speak to the rock not to hit it. Why was the rod necessary if this is the case? Well the attentive reader is rewarded here because they'll realize that the rod is not Moses rod it's the rod of Aaron. It's taken from before the Lord which is where Aaron's rod, the rod that had blossomed was placed.

Moses rod was connected with striking the Egyptians but the rod of Aaron had become associated with his priestly office and intercession. The rod was powerful because it was before the Lord. It represented Aaron's access to the presence of the Lord and the symbolic significance of the rod is far more important than any power that seems to be invested in the rod itself.

Very easy to think of the rod of Moses or Aaron as magical rods that in themselves they have some great power but the real power is that of the Lord and speaking will be every bit as effective as striking. They do not need some magical rod to achieve this purpose. Bringing along the rod that represents Aaron's access to the Lord is going to show where the real power lies.

Not in the rod itself but in what the rod stands for. Aaron's access to and presence with the Lord and Moses access to and his ability to intercede with the Lord. And the difference between the events of Exodus 17 and the events of Numbers 20 are also worth noting.

The rock was passive in the event of Exodus 17. The rock was struck and water came out of it but here the rock is spoken of as giving its water freely. Striking is how slaves are treated but you speak to free persons and the two actions mean very different things.

We're supposed to read these passages alongside each other and not just notice the similarities but notice the progressions and the differences. Fourth, he failed to treat the

Lord as holy. This is seen in his failure to obey also in his failure to trust but perhaps there's something more going on.

The Lord in the book of Deuteronomy particularly is associated with the rock. In Deuteronomy chapter 20 in the Song of Moses we see this on numerous occasions that the Lord is associated with the rock. He's personified as the rock.

The Lord stands before Moses on the rock in Exodus chapter 17 when Moses is instructed to strike it. The people were almost ready to stone Moses in that chapter but the Lord was struck so that the people would be given something to drink. But here however the rock just needs to be petitioned.

The rock is a physical object but also stands for God's provision for his people. The Lord had once submitted to being struck by people who reasoned as slaves with the logic of force. People who had to be struck in order to do something or people who had to strike in order to get a message across.

And here that logic of force is supposed to be replaced by a pattern of free address and intercession. The Lord now wishes Moses and Aaron to demonstrate that the rock as a servant and a representation of the Lord will freely give of its water to them if only they ask. Fifth and finally the Lord is angry with Moses and Aaron on account of the people.

Now why is that? To this point Moses has largely stood apart from all of the Israelites marked out by his faithfulness. On account of this he has been able to intercede for and intermedicate for them when they have sinned. By virtue of Aaron's close association with Moses Aaron has also been preserved.

However here Moses himself sins in a marked way and manifests the same rot of rebellion that has been working through the whole people in the book of Numbers. He is now associated with the people in that trait for which they are being excluded from the land and he as their leader and model has much less latitude granted to him for forgiveness. He has to model faithfulness to an unfaithful people and when he fails to do that the consequences are quite severe.

What else might be going on here? Well Moses has just been bereaved. He's lost his older sister Miriam and it doesn't seem that they've had proper time to mourn her because the water crisis has immediately struck. There's no mention of the time of mourning that we have at the end of the chapter for Aaron and the people are quarrelling with him again.

At this point it becomes personal for him. He's lost one of the closest people to him, the older sister who had helped to deliver him as an infant, the leader of the women who had assisted him in leading that part of the congregation alongside him. The loss of his sister perhaps leads him to feel isolated and to neglect the presence of the Lord that is with

him, feeling more keenly the opposition of the people.

It's now become Moses versus the people and the Lord isn't really in the picture. And Miriam may be in this story in subtle ways. David Foreman observes that you can vowelise the letters of Miriam's name in three different ways.

Marim for bitter which is used in the story of Mara at the end of Exodus chapter 15. Merim for the participle of lifting up which is connected to Moses' action of lifting up the rod to strike the rock. And then finally Morim, rebels, which is the way that he addresses the people of Israel.

And so perhaps Miriam is playing in the background here. Her death is connected with the provision of living water that will provide for a new start for the people of Israel. She's connected with the red heifer of the previous chapter and the death of that red heifer, the provision of its ashes and the living water are the means by which people can re-enter the camp of the Lord's presence once they've been excluded because of contact with death.

All these people connected with the death of the previous generation, they can enter in as a result of the death of people like Miriam and the provision of the living water here is supposed to be read against the background of that. Her association with the provision of water and her death just as the water runs out suggests that there are some deeper associations here and this is something that Jewish commentators have long recognized and commented upon. Israel requests right of passage through Edom to go up through the King's Highway not to take anything from the land but just to have a shorter journey to the destination of the promised land and Edom spoken of in the singular reminds us that Edom and Israel are the brothers Esau and Jacob.

They reference the angel that brought them out of Egypt in verse 16. In Exodus chapter 23 verse 20 the angel is described as going ahead of them. Israel is not a warmongering people in relation to its neighbors.

They ask for peaceful travel through the land of Edom but Edom resists and presents a show of strength and they go another way. They have to go the long way round. They're prevented from going through Edomite territory and this seems to be one of the ways in which Moses is prevented from entering into the land.

This is followed by the death of Aaron going up Mount Hor and being replaced by his son Eliezer. The death of Aaron is the death of the High Priest and the death of the High Priest is also an event of transition. The death of Miriam as we have seen is an event of transition and the death of the High Priest also affects a transition.

In Numbers chapter 35 verse 32 we have the description of the cities of refuge and then told what will happen to the manslayer who is in such a city of refuge. Israel is going to

be released from its wandering in the wilderness, released from its exile from the land with the death of people like Miriam, with the death of Aaron and then finally with the death of Moses. There are sacrificial themes here.

The death of particular human beings cleanse the land and enable the people to enter in. The death of these three leading characters then, read against the backdrop of the law of the Red Heifer, helps us to understand this transition. The transition from the generation two years after the Exodus to the generation on the borders of the land about to enter in and now being cleansed so that they can enter into the land.

The death of Aaron cleanses the land then, it wipes clean the slate and this can help us to understand why Eliezer is important here. Eliezer is mentioned in the previous chapter in Numbers chapter 19 verses 2 to 4. With Eliezer, the baton is handed on to the next generation. He is part of administering this right of the Red Heifer.

He is one who sees that old generation die. He is rendered impure because of his association with the Red Heifer and its ashes but he will be the one as he administers it to lead the people into the land and he and they will be cleansed. A question to consider, how might the manner of Moses' sin be instructive and cautionary for us in our behavior? Mark chapter 14 verses 26 to 52.

And when they had sung a hymn they went out to the Mount of Olives and Jesus said to them you will all fall away for it is written I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered but after I'm raised up I will go before you to Galilee. Peter said to him even though they all fall away I will not and Jesus said to him truly I tell you this very night before the rooster crows twice you will deny me three times but he said emphatically if I must die with you I will not deny you and they all said the same and they went to a place called Gethsemane and he said to his disciples sit here while I pray and he took with him Peter and James and John and began to be greatly distressed and troubled and he said to them my soul is very sorrowful even to death remain here and watch and going a little farther he fell on the ground and prayed that if it were possible the hour might pass from him and he said Abba father all things are possible for you remove this cup from me yet not what I will but what you will and he came and found them sleeping and he said to Peter Simon are you asleep could you not watch one hour watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation the spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak and again he went away and prayed saying the same words and again he came and found them sleeping for their eyes were very heavy and they did not know what to answer him and he came the third time and said to them are you still sleeping and taking your rest it is enough the hour has come the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners rise let us be going see my betrayer is at hand and immediately while he was still speaking Judas came one of the twelve and with him a crowd with swords and clubs from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders now the betrayer had given them a sign saying the one I will kiss is the man seize him and lead him away under guard and when he came

he went up to him at once and said rabbi and he kissed him and they laid hands on him and seized him but one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear and Jesus said to them have you come out as against a robber with swords and clubs to capture me day after day I was with you in the temple teaching and you did not seize me but let the scriptures be fulfilled and they all left him and fled and a young man followed him with nothing but a linen cloth about his body and they seized him but he left the linen cloth and ran away naked we have now arrived at the middle section of Mark chapter 16 Jesus makes three predictions in this chapter and there are three fulfillments Judas's betrayal the disciples desertion and Peter's denial and each of these three predictions is fulfilled in order by the end of the chapter after singing a hymn they go out to the Mount of Olives the hymn was presumably one of the Psalms that ended the Passover meal Psalms 113 and 114 were traditionally sung beforehand and afterwards Psalms 115 to 118 would have been sung so presumably these are the things that Jesus would have sung at this point they go out to the Mount of Olives this continues the movements back and forth between the Mount and the city and the Mount of Olives Jesus quotes Zechariah chapter 13 verse 7 to speak about the way that his disciples will forsake him strike the shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be scattered as usual it's important to hear the stories behind the stories this is another illusion from the one that we've seen in the triumphal entry to Zechariah the rejected Messiah will be wounded and killed but the end of Zechariah is one of great deliverance and blessing to the nation and the wider peoples perhaps notably the last chapter of Zechariah begins with key references to the Mount of Olives Jesus foretells what's going to happen in his disciples forsaking of him but he also foretells the resurrection and the fact that he will meet them again in Galilee returning to where he first called them the scattered sheep and the struck shepherd will be reunited again Peter however told that they will forsake Christ has an excessive confidence in his own abilities he insistently denies that he will deny Christ puffed up he presents himself as the most faithful disciple and perhaps we should see a connection between the proud crowing cock and Peter himself in Mark we're told that the cock will crow twice and many have seen a contradiction between this and other gospel accounts I think it's quite natural to think that the other gospel accounts removed one of the references to the crowing of the cock because one is enough to get the point across the reference to the cock crowing twice here probably occurs because Mark's source is Peter himself and Peter has the most vivid memory of the event however most cocks that crowed would crow multiple times and would likely be joined by others it's a rather strange detail to camp out on as a contradiction Peter is the lead disciple he recognizes that Jesus will die but he thinks he is faithful enough to die with him perhaps he doesn't realize just how much pressure he'll be put under or perhaps he doesn't realize the type of pressure he'll be put under either way his pride at this point will soon be deflated by events Jesus goes to pray in the Garden of Gethsemane he prays three times for the cup to be removed and is joined by Peter James and John these are the same three disciples as were present at the transfiguration the raising of Jairus's daughter they're probably near enough to hear what Jesus is saying

they have an intimate view into Jesus prayer life at its most remarkable and powerful moment and yet they fall asleep Jesus challenges Peter in particular for his failure to watch one hour Peter the one who had been so proud and boastful about his ability to stand with Christ his ability to stand when all others would forsake and now Peter has failed just to keep awake Jesus charges them watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation into the trial or the testing or the tribulation that would test them beyond their capacity Jesus at the very beginning of the gospel had been brought into temptation by the Spirit cast out into the wilderness facing the temptation of Satan in a position where he lacked the resources that he needed to eat and was tested to the limits of his strength a similar time of trial and testing and tribulation is opening up now and he will once again face off with Satan himself and the disciples are on the brink of that moment and they're falling asleep they're not prepared three times they are tested and three times they fail in contrast to Jesus in the wilderness the Spirit is willing but the flesh is weak they're zealous particularly Peter but they lack the ability to carry it through in practice and I think Jesus words here reflect his own struggle he himself knows what it is to feel temptation the struggle to persevere with his vocation when his flesh is crying out against what the cross means against the pain and the agony and all the other things that the cross represents if anyone's spirit is willing crisis but if anyone is facing a battle with the flesh and its instinctive desire to avoid suffering and pain and hardship Christ is facing that struggle in this we're seeing a contrast between Christ and his disciples Christ who watches and prays as he prepares for the temptation this testing that he will go through and the disciples as the weakness of their flesh overcomes them and they cannot stand in the hour that they need to stand Christ is tempted in every way as we are tempted to fall back tempted to divert from the path that the father has set before him tempted to give up the cup that had been handed to him but he perseveres he faces temptation and does not sin and in this he provides not only a contrast with us but also an example to us after returning the third time Jesus says it is enough the matter for which he wanted their presence is now settled and his betrayer is at hand Judas comes with the mob we're told he's one of the twelve we know that Judas is one of the twelve already but it tells us that to underline the point this is one of his closest friends he's been betrayed by someone he's invested the last three years of his life in he's been close to this person he's trusted this person he's given power to this person to do miracles in his name this person has witnessed all that Christ has done and now he's turning against him and he betrays Christ with a kiss an act of greeting to single him out from the others but the cruelty and the wickedness of the betrayal is heightened by the manner in which it occurs this act of greeting and love and tenderness and friendship is exploited as a means to destroy someone betrayal with a kiss might remind us of the story of Joab and Amasa in 2nd Samuel chapter 20 verses 9 to 10 one of those who's with Jesus a bystander identified as Peter elsewhere strikes the high priest servant and Jesus points out that they could have taken him in the temple he was teaching there openly by day and yet here they are arresting him like some criminal like some brigand this of course is all part of the plan of the chief priests and the scribes they wanted to

arrest Jesus by stealth because they didn't want the crowd to have notice of it they wanted this all to go down as quietly and behind the scenes as possible so that there would not be unrest at the time of the feast this however happens in order that the scriptures might be fulfilled Christ is numbered with the transgressors it says in Isaiah chapter 53 and the disciples now all flee there's a reference here to a young man in a linen garment who was seized but ran away naked it's rather surprising in the context and a bit comical none of the other Gospels record this detail and many different suggestions about the identity of this figure have been put forward perhaps it was a disciple of Jesus who witnessed the event later became a witness to the event and was known among many in the early church others have suggested it was Mark himself Mark had a house in Jerusalem which some have identified with the site of the Last Supper and so maybe he was a witness to this event himself and he writes himself into his gospel without putting himself in by name others have seen some symbolic import here in a mass chapter 2 verse 16 he who is stout of heart among the mighty shall flee away naked in that day declares the Lord when God judges and this event of crisis comes people will flee away naked perhaps there is some reference here to the previous chapter Mark chapter 13 verses 15 to 16 reads let the one who is on the housetop not go down nor enter his house to take anything out and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak maybe we're supposed to hear the events of the previous chapter being played out in some way here a question to consider in the disciples falling asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane and in the cock crowing bringing Peter to his senses we should be reminded of the centrality of the charge to be wakeful in the previous chapter in Mark chapter 13 verses 33 to 37 we read be on guard keep awake for you do not know when the time will come it is like a man going on a journey when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge each with his work and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake therefore stay awake for you do not know when the master of the house will come in the evening or at midnight or when the rooster crows or in the morning lest he comes suddenly and find you asleep and what I say to you I say to all stay awake reading mark 14 against the backdrop 13 what parallels do you notice what do these parallels suggest and what can they teach us