

**TITLE: Faaola/fiaola in Matthew 7:24-8:22 – Discipleship in/to the 'lotoifale, lotoinuu, lotoiekalesia' (local contexts)**

file 1 & 2  
**What is faaola and fiaola?**

*Faaola* means 'giving life' or 'life saviour'

*Fiaola* is made up of two words. The first is *fia* meaning 'wanting to' or 'willing to'. The other word is *ola* meaning 'life.' *Fiaola* therefore means 'wanting life' or 'seeking life.' Simply put, 'vying for survival.'

slide 2  
**How this reading came about**

Traditional interpretations and practices of discipleship are questioned:

Traditional interpretations and practices such as:

- Leave family and follow
- Church needs are more important than family needs

Questions include:

- If Jesus came to save all, does his commanding of his disciples to leave their families and follow him show the egalitarian purpose of his proclamation of God's kingdom?
- Jesus himself is a family person. He was brought up in a family. He has parents. Does Jesus really want his disciples to leave their families without return?

These questions instil in me the interest to revisit the texts – traditional texts about discipleship

slide 3  
**How this revisiting (reading) is carried out**

1. Sees the text as *fiaola* (hermeneutic)
2. Reads the text as *fiaola* (adapted from socio-rhetorical)

3.4  
**Fiaola as hermeneutic: its elements**

1. Considers family needs important
2. See life from hybridity – fluctuate etc
3. Has courage to enter unfamiliar spaces/relationship
4. *Fiaola* will become a *faaola* (disciple) to his/her own family

S5  
**Fiaola reading method**

5.6  
*Fiaola* is linked to a 'lotoifale' – a text has a *lotoifale* which i call a *lotoitusiga*. From *fiaola*'s point of view a *lotoitusiga* has *tuaoi faatusiga* (literary boundaries) in relation to time, space,

people etc shown in the language of the *tusiga* (text). These *tuaoi faa-tusiga* forms a *siomiaga fiaola faa-le-tusiga* (*fiaola* rhetorical unit).

Thus, the first task of *fiaola* reading is identifying a *siomiaga fiaola faa-le-tusiga* by identifying its *anofale* (the world that is encoded in this unit). This is indicated by signs (opening and closing signs). In finding this, is identifying how the language of the text shows *faaola* and *fiaola* relationship to each other in the chosen part of the story. How the *faaola* and *fiaola* are linked to households/families in this part. How their movements relate to time and space in this part of the story – such as time of day and movement in between spaces...

The next part of the reading is analysing the *mamanu* (textures) of the *anofale* of the unit

- Analyse the *faasologa* (progression)
- Analyse *tagata auai* (characters)
- Analyse the *mamanuina o faaupuga* (word patterns) etc

It is followed by analysing how *upu sii* (recitation) is used in the *anofale* of the *siomiaga fiaola faa-le-tusiga*

Questions that will guide the analysis:

- Who is *fiaola* in the text?
- Who is *faaola* in the text?
- How is *fiaola/faaola* linked to households shown in the text?

Now is the *fiaola* reading of 7:24-8:22

Talks about 7:24-8:22 as a unit... —

13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18

Coming to analysing the recitation emphasis will be given to LXX as there is a belief that Matthew's recitations are taken from the LXX

The use of Isa 53:4a, a *upu sii* (recitation) in the *siomiaga fiaola faa-le-tusiga* (7:24-8:22)

LXX – Isa 53:4a

οὗτος τὰς ἀμαρτίας ἡμῶν φέρει καὶ περὶ ἡμῶν ὀδυνᾶται

(He bears our sins and is pained for us)

**Matt 8:17**

Αὐτὸς τὰς ἀσθενείας ἡμῶν ἔλαβεν καὶ τὰς νόσους ἐβάστασεν

(He took our infirmities and bore our diseases)

What is encoded in the Matthean recitation are traces of the Isaiah text's reference to Israel's return from exile in Babylon. It was the time when the Persian Empire led by Cyrus displaced the Assyrian empire.<sup>1</sup> According to that background, some scholars identified the servant as Israel. Others identified the servant as Cyrus while some saw the servant as a prophet himself. While various attempts identify who the servant is in Isa 53:4, at this stage of the analysis, it is not the important aspect. What is important now according to the narrator is that the servant has already arrived. And this aspect is reflected in the Matthean reconfiguration of Isa 53:4a. It is revealed in the utilization of the verbs ἔλαβεν and ἐβάστασεν. These verbs in their aorist tense express the complete sense of the prophecy.<sup>2</sup> The narrative placement of the recitation after the healing actions of Jesus in 8:1-16 uses the aorist tense which suggests that the taking of infirmities and diseases the recitation refers to are actions already undertaken by Jesus in 7:24-8:16. Thus, the Matthean recitation of Isa 53:4a echoes Jesus actions in that particular part of the Matthean story.

This is shown in the use of word ἀσθενείας (sickness) in the Matthean recitation.<sup>3</sup> This is the Matthean only utilization of the word ἀσθενείας<sup>4</sup> because the suffering that Jesus is dealing with here is physical sickness.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the Matthean use of ἀσθενείας reveals that the type of sickness Matthew emphasises is bodily strength that is weakened.

The Matthean use of the verbs ἔλαβεν and ἐβάστασεν show another type of taking and carrying of the people's suffering that differs from the LXX text. The Matthean utilization of ἔλαβεν expresses the servant's taking the sufferings of others not as carrying them upon himself or herself, but as taking away the suffering.<sup>6</sup> The word ἔλαβεν comes from the word λαμβάνω and is translated as 'he or she took away or removed.'<sup>7</sup> The Matthean use of ἐβάστασεν in the second part of the recitation shows another alteration which affirms the narrator's link to the immediate context of Jesus' preaching, teaching, and healing ministry.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See, Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66*, NICOT (Louisville: WJK, 1998), 1-2; Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, 227-29; Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 40-66*, 7-10.

<sup>2</sup> The aorist tense in Greek is the conventional translation of a Hebrew Perfect which refers to the past activities.

<sup>3</sup> According to Martin Hengel, the LXX's rendering of Isaiah 53 strengthens vicarious suffering emphasis lacking in the Jewish sources. Martin Hengel, "The Effective History of Isaiah 53 in the Pre-Christian Period," *The Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 in Jewish and Christian Sources*, eds. Bernd Janowski and Peter Stuhlmacher (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 119. See also David's Hill's interpretation to support his claim of Jesus as the Servant of God Christology in Matthew's gospel. Hill, "Son and Servant," 9.

<sup>4</sup> See Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 362.

<sup>5</sup> "ἀσθενεία" *BDAG*, 142.

<sup>6</sup> Examples of interpretations that see Matthew's recitation as 'suffering is taken away: Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 361-62; Schweizer, *The Good News*, 217.

<sup>7</sup> For the meaning of ἔλαβεν, see "λαμβάνω" *BDAG*, 583.

<sup>8</sup> The following two interpretations help clarify my interpretation of ἐβάστασεν. Menken spoke of Matthew's use of ἐβάστασεν as Matthew's own rendering that stresses the idea of 'taking away' and he linked that to Matthew's other use of βαστάζω in Matt 3:11 and 20:12 to have expressed the same idea. Menken, "The Source of the Quotation from Isaiah 53:4," 322. Novakovic's interpretation of Matthew's utilization of ἐβάστασεν also interpreted it to have embodied the idea of 'the carrying away' as revealed in ἔλαβεν. Novakovic, "Matthew's Atomistic Use of the Scripture," 156. Menken and Novakovic did not elaborate on the function of Matthew's utilization of ἐβάστασεν as exhibiting the idea of 'carrying away' in accordance with the narrative and rhetorical context of Matt 8. My interpretation of Matthew's use of ἐβάστασεν shown here is that like Menken and Novakovic it carries the idea of 'the taking away' but, in the sense of Jesus' carrying upon himself that taking

In the second part of the prophecy, the LXX text speaks of the servant's bearing of other people's diseases and sins as part of the vicarious suffering mentioned in the first part of the sentence (He bears our sins). For the Matthean presentation of Jesus' ministry, ἐβάστασεν also bears the sense of taking upon himself the suffering but not in the sense shown in the LXX text.

The Matthean carrying of the suffering of others expressed in ἐβάστασεν relates not to the carrying of diseases upon himself but to his endurance of the long day of work indicated by 'evening' in Matthew 8:16.<sup>9</sup> That claim is based on the Matthean use of the verb βαστάζω (sustain a burden)<sup>10</sup> in relation to a long day of work. The first Matthean utilization of the verb is βαστάσαι in 3:11. It is in the aorist infinitive active and describes John the Baptist's admitting that he is not fit enough to carry Jesus' sandals. The context of the environment and its surrounding in which John the Baptist proclaimed ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν in this part of the Matthean story is in the wilderness of Judea (3:1). It was where John the Baptist wore clothing of camel's hair, and ate locusts and wild honey (3:4). That type of environment presents a picture of the kind of work John encountered. It was not easy work and the Matthean narrator's use of βαστάσαι as strengthening a link between John's words (he is not fit enough to carry Jesus' sandals) and John's long days of work in the heat of the wilderness (3:1-4). Thus, John the Baptist's words (3:11) are not about unworthiness as humbleness as other interpretations claim. It is unworthiness as not having physical strength and energy to carry on the proclamation of ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.

Another use of βαστάζω is its aorist participle active (βαστάσασι – having borne) that describes the actions of the labourer who have worked all day long in the heat in the parable of the labourers in the vineyard in 20:11. This use of βαστάζω is linked to 'evening', the time of the day in which the owner of the vineyard calls the labourers and gives them their pay (20:8). The Matthean recitation of Isa 53:4a also exhibits that link of 'carrying' to a 'long day of work' also shown in the utilisation of ἐβάστασεν in 8:17. Its function in the Matthean recitation is linked to

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away in the long day of work he faced in his teaching, preaching and healing. According to the rhetorical and narrative context of 7:24-8:22, that hardship is reflected in the long day of work indicated by the mention of 'evening' (v. 16) in which more people from the crowd sought help in Jesus' ministry. And that whole day of healing in Capernaum probably caused havoc among the people of Capernaum in particular between Jesus' followers and those who resisted Jesus' ministry which may be why Jesus ordered the crowd to go over the other side of the sea. It was not that Jesus was afraid of his enemies but to make sure that the needs of more members of the crowd were dealt with. It could be the reason for Jesus' responses to the scribe and another of his disciples.

<sup>9</sup> Many interpretations have considered the whole recitation as showing Jesus' carrying away of the suffering of others as mentioned above. Donald Senior's interpretation instead spoke of the difference between the first part and the second part of the quotation. For Senior the first part, "takes away our physical illnesses" emphasises the healing activity but the second part "and bore our diseases," is about the vicarious suffering of the servant. My analysis supports the contention that there is difference shown in the first and second part of the recitation. Like other interpretations, I see the first part to have shown the servant's taking away of the suffering. But I interpret the second part of the recitation to have shown the servant taking upon himself the suffering of others not as vicarious suffering but suffering of the body because of the long day of work to help take away the suffering of others.

<sup>10</sup> For this definition, see, "βαστάζω" *BDAG*, 171.

'evening' in verse 16, the time of the day that culminates the long day of work Jesus faced which began from preaching on the mountain (7:24-29) to healing activities (8:1-16). Some interpretations consider 'evening' not important in defining the meaning and purpose of Jesus' healing actions in this part of the story.<sup>11</sup> From my *fiola* hermeneutic, it is considered important in this analysis especially its connection to ἐβάστασεν. The connection pictures the kind of suffering Matthew speaks about in this part of the story. It shows that the Matthean intertextuality in relation to Isa 53:4a also bears the meaning of carrying another person's suffering but not in the sense of vicarious suffering. Rather, it expresses the endurance of the long day of work that Jesus encountered by helping those in need first mentioned in 5:1.<sup>12</sup> Thus, carrying away other people's suffering in and through a long day of work is significant in the whole unit (7:24-8:22). It closes the middle section of the unit, anticipating the reasons for Jesus' responses to the scribe and another of his disciple in the ending part of the unit (8:18-22).

2( In the ending part of the unit, Jesus gave orders to the crowd to go over to the other side – side of the river. And a scribe approached him and said, "I will follow you wherever you go." And Jesus said, "*Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.*" One of the main interpretations of these words of Jesus is that they show Jesus' homelessness in his ministry. However, from the *fiola* hermeneutic, I see Jesus' response to the scribe as showing not his homelessness but the undertaking of discipleship as a restless mission. This is pictured in the meaning of the phrase οὐκ ἔχει ποῦ τὴν κεφαλὴν κλίνει (has nowhere he might lay the head). The word κλίνει which means "to cause something to incline or bend" or "to sleep"<sup>13</sup> plays a very important part in defining that phrase. It has a sense of "voluntary act"<sup>14</sup> and is the word used to describe the bowing of Jesus' head before he died in

<sup>11</sup> For example, France writes that the time of the day which mentioned in Mark is important as it reveals the day Jesus healed the sick in Peter's mother-in-law's house. Because a day is not explicitly mentioned in Matthew, France therefore highlights 'evening' in verse 16 as having little significance to the meaning of the sentence. For France, the focus of verse 16 was mainly to anticipate the uttering of the fulfillment quotation in verse 17 whose central emphasis is the authority of Jesus as healer. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 321. However, the interpretation shown in the analysis presented in this study reveals 'evening' as the time of the day as important. For Matthew, the specific day is not important but rather the length of the day used in his ministry. This is shown in the mention of 'evening,' affirmed by Matthew's use of ἐβάστασεν as explained in this analysis.

<sup>12</sup> I agree with Schweizer's consideration of the day that ends in the 'evening' mentioned in 8:16 to have begun from 5:1. Schweizer, *The Good News*, 217. According to Schweizer, the reason why Matthew omitted the Sabbath as the day of the healings mentioned in Mark is because the day Matthew emphasises is no longer Sabbath and that day begins from 5:1. Schweizer did not explain why he considered 5:1 as the beginning of the long day. For the analysis shown here, Matt 8:16 as part of the summarization of Jesus' actions (8:16-17) in Matthew chapters 5 to 8 is interpreted as anticipation of Matthew's use of Isa 53:4a. Matt 8:16 speaks of Jesus' healing of all the sick and those possessed with demons which is undertaken in the evening followed by the crowd's following (reflected in Jesus' ordering the crowd to go over to the other side). Thus, Matt 8:17 as the Matthean recitation and reconfiguration of Isa 53:4 as explained could be interpreted to have reflected anticipation of one long day of Jesus' ministry in the Matthean story that began in 5:1 Matthew's story. In this way, I agree with Schweizer's claim that the long day of work indicated by 'evening' in 8:16 begins from 5:1.

<sup>13</sup> "Κλίνω" *BDAG* 549-50.

<sup>14</sup> "Κλίνω" *BDAG* 549-50.



John 19:30. Thus, 'lay the head' expresses a sense of voluntary death. So 'lay the head' in Jesus' response to the scribe could be looked at as showing Jesus' voluntary undertaking of helping the local people in need despite the danger that his ministry encounters. It is Jesus' attending to the demands of his ministry without rest.

After the scribe's request, another disciple of Jesus approaches him. He wants to go and bury his father first. Jesus' dialogue with the disciple reveals that the disciple is a family person who knows his role as a son. This interpretation is reflected in the son's request to go and bury his father. But Jesus' response shows the opposite. This dialogue has been interpreted as showing the cost of discipleship where the family is to be abandoned when one becomes a disciple. It appears as if Jesus places more value on following him than on commitment to family. Would a son leave his dead father behind without saying good bye? This son should not consider himself part of the family he has left behind. But is this really what Jesus wants?

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As seen through the lens of *fiola*, it is not how the text should be interpreted. In this part of the story, the disciple speaks to Jesus in the evening. It is not the time of the day to bury a family member. Later in the story (9:1), Jesus is shown getting into the boat and returning to his own town which is Capernaum. If the disciple who requested to go and bury his father went with Jesus to the other side of the sea, then he is part of Jesus' return to Capernaum. As such, Jesus' saying "*Follow me and let the dead bury the dead*" does not mean abandon the family and follow without return. Rather, Jesus' telling him to leave his father and follow is because night time is not a good time to bury his father. So the disciple makes use of his time instead to go with Jesus to the other side of the sea until the next day which, according to the narrator, is the day that Jesus returns to Capernaum. It is the good and right time for the disciple to go and bury his father. Thus, the analysis shows that Jesus' response to the disciple is not a command to abandon his obligation to his family but to make use of his time as a disciple to help the local people in need. Thus, a *fiola* needs to know how to deal with life in the *lotoifale*, *lotoinuu*, and *lotoiekalesia* in relation to the appropriate time and space.

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This *fiola* reading has shown that 7:24-8:22 as part of the Matthean presentation of Jesus' ministry reveals another important characteristic of becoming his disciple, namely, that 'Jesus summoned members of the crowd (*fiola*) to listen, and the (*fiola*) who listened were sent back to help their families.' In itself, it shows Jesus' dealing with local needs in light of the situations in which those in need are caught. As such, it suggests that there are other disciples – *faola* – apart from the twelve portrayed in the Matthean presentation of Jesus' ministry.

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