



# Thuma Mina - an Isaiah 6:8 perspective in crossfire with Step-aside: SA ruling party's moral restoration efforts

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## Abstract

This article builds on the excellent article by Prof. Kgatle and Mashau who examined the prospects and success of the presidency of Cyril Ramaphosa by reflecting on the concept of Thuma Mina. In this article, Ramaphosa's Thuma Mina's manifesto is placed in the same restorative context as the implementation of the African National Congress (ANC) step-aid resolution. Almost 27 years of democracy today since the ANC came to power in South Africa in 1994, and yet it's members' moral values continue to decline, as reflected in Gwede Mantashe's devastating Organizational Diagnostic Report. This paper reflects upon the concept of Thuma Mina at Isaiah 6: 8 as redirected into politics by Cyril Ramaphosa to fight corruption in collaboration with the resolution of the 54th Conference. The Thuma Mina Group's implementation of Step-Aside threatened the unity of the ANC when the then suspended ANC General Secretary suspended his own suspension to suspend the ANC's President Cyril Ramaphosa. If the Magashule group succeeds in flaunting the party rules and rejecting the Step-Aside policy, this will lead to a political catastrophe. This paper uses two disciplines (theology and politics) to shed light on the prospects of Thuma Mina as advocated by President Cyril Ramaphosa, along with the fair implementation of the ANC's Step Aside resolution. This paper is important as it provides a more concise understanding of the concept of Thuma Mina within political campaigning.

**Keywords:** Thuma Mina, Step-aside, Cyril Ramaphosa, Jacob Zuma, Ace Magashule, prophet Isaiah, Kgatle, Mashau,

## Introduction

Kgatle and Mashau (2021) on their excellent article entitled: "Thuma Mina: A critical discourse on the prospect of a Ramaphosa presidency through the lenses of Isaiah 6:8" examined the prospects and success of the presidency of Cyril Ramaphosa's as they reflected on the concept of Thuma Mina from both the perspective of the biblical roots at Isaiah 6: 8 and as a political campaign of Ramaphosa on February 16, 2018. They believed that, despite all odds, Ramaphosa's presidency will be successful if he continues to adopt the spirit of Thuma Mina. However, the interpretation and implementation of step-aside policy as adopted by the ANC 54<sup>th</sup> National Conference in 2017 seem to encroach upon the hopefulness of Ramaphosa's presidency as it has become the conundrum that seeks to split the party into the Thuma Mina faction against the Ace Magashule's faction To continue the discussion, the current article looks at the crossfire created by the use of Thuma Mina and the pushbacks witnessed during the implementation of the ANC's Step-Aside resolution in 2021.

This article uses two disciplines (theology and politics) to understand the biblical meaning of the concept of Thuma Mina as a political campaign and as it appears in Isaiah 6: 8 alongside



the enigma of the implementation of the ANC's 54<sup>th</sup> National Conference resolution of step-aside.

First, this article will outline the state of affairs as they relate to corruption in the African National Congress (ANC) through the lens of its organizational-diagnostic report presented by its former Secretary General, Gwede Mantashe at the start of the ANC's 54<sup>th</sup> National Conference in 2017. Second, it will focus on the ANC's step-aside resolution, its background, implications and application in as far as ANC members are concerned. Thirdly, it will trace the concept of Thuma Mina rightfully back to its Biblical roots and its understanding as it relates to campaigns by President Cyril Ramaphosa. Fourthly, it will look into obstacles that seem to hinder Cyril Ramaphosa and his group from executing the Thuma Mina mandate effectively. Fifthly, it will focus on the political crossfire that took place between the Thuma Mina group and the Magashule group at the time when the Thuma Mina group sought to implement the step-aside policy. Lastly, it will predict the looming political catastrophe that will befall South Africa in circumstances whereby the Magashule group resist the law of the country and persist to discard the step-aside policy implementation.

### **ANC organizational-diagnostic report**

The organizational diagnostic report presented at the start of the 54<sup>th</sup> ANC National Conference (16-20 December 2017) existed within the context that was laid or highlighted in the 52<sup>nd</sup> and 53<sup>rd</sup> ANCs National Conference both presented by Gwede Mantashe, who already then painted the picture of moral regeneration challenge facing the ANC. However, it is important to highlight that the organizational-diagnostic report was one of its own kind and thus served a different purpose than the normal ANC national conference's organization reports presented at the start of the policy conference normally covering the previous years since the last national conference. Rather, the diagnostic report has the following background:

As early as on 25 October 2016, the ANC's Stalwarts presented a document entitled: "For the Sake of Our Future" to the ANC top six officials. This document was authored by some highly respected ANC anti-apartheid struggle figures such as Andrew Mlangeni, Mavuso Msimang, Denis Goldberg, Sheila Sisulu, Gertrude Shope and Ben Turok (Makhafola, 2017). In this document, it made few observations such as the ill-begotten wealth by some ANC members, the organizational moral ruins, the in-fighting due to personal interests, the continuous decline of support and membership, failure by the leadership to act against corruption, factionalism, member arrogance, nepotism etc.

So, since the leadership appeared to have failed in its duty of protecting ANC from the alluded decline, ANC Stalwarts believed it was important to restore the ANC back to its health before the 2019 National Election and such restoration or process of self-reflection and introspection was to be overseen by the ANC Stalwarts and veterans. This document further proposed that the facilitation of this process should have a two legged bottom-up approach: Whereby 1. There was to be open and transparent discussion by ANC members at various platforms and also 2. There would a national listening campaign to allow inputs generally from the people of South Africa as a whole. A bottom-up approach would culminate in a consultative conference that would then precede the ANC 2017 elective conference. According to this document, undertaking of these processes was aimed at winning back the confidence of the people (ANC Stalwarts, 2016:2-5).

Most commentators including ANC members believed this was a scathing report which explicitly showed that the ANC as the ruling party is sick and suffers from a serious infection, and that its leaders are corrupt resulting in the whole needing serious moral heal (Modjadji, 2017), while others believed the diagnostic report to be signs of hope that the ANC has the potential to save itself in particular and South Africa in its entirety. Employing metaphor to describe the situation that the ANC founds itself in, McCauley (2017) said: "The ANC is not dead but Mantashe's diagnosis might just have saved it a trip in an ambulance - that is, if it

accepts the diagnosis and starts treatment immediately”. After much contestation, the ANC National Executive Committee (NEC) decided to have the organizational diagnostic report prepared, presented discuss it for the first two days at the start of the ANC fifth policy conference.

On 30 June 2017, during the plenary at the ANC fifth Policy conference which came six months before its five-yearly elective conference that was to be held at the Nasrec, South of Johannesburg from 16 to 20 December 2017, the then ANC secretary-general, Gwede Mantashe against objections from some within the ANC, presented the ANC organizational-diagnostic report. According to Mokone and Mahlakoana (2017) those who sought to prevent Gwede Mantashe from reading the report included among others, Provinces such as Mpumalanga – through the leadership of David Mabuza, North-West – lead by Supra Mahumapelo and the Free State – under Ace Magashule as groups which supported the then President of both the ANC and the country, Jacob Zuma arguing that it is not in the culture of the ANC conferences to discuss documents which in their view were a direct attack on president Jacob Zuma.

Some of the concerns highlighted in the diagnostic report include but not limited to:

1. That since the national general elections held in 2009, the ANC’s electoral performance dropped due to the poor quality of branches and decline in the ANC’s ideological outlook (Mantashe, 2017:3-4)
2. That some ANC members made themselves sole protectors of President Jacob Zuma and end up making reckless statements in their attempts to protect him (2017:6).
3. That those in the leadership of the movement display arrogance believing that the ANC is untouchable and that South Africans are ignorant (2017:10)
4. That the ANC due to factionalism is slowly falling into a lawfare as it has be directed by courts from time to time, and this gives the impression that the ANC does not know the difference between what is right and what is wrong (2017:11)
5. That since the ANC has factions, the dominant faction refuse to listen to different views by the less dominant faction, various sectors of society and its alliance parties and even use deployment to punish those in a less dominant faction (2017:11,22)
6. That the ANC is characterised by lack of trust as one of its key characteristic among its members. Members hate each other with hearts and seek to destroy each other (2017:22)
7. That due to hunger for power, members of the ANC fight one another for deployment as either Members of Parliament (MP), Member of the Provincial Legislature (MPL) and councilors: “as if there is no tomorrow”. Thus creating an impression that deployment is a source of material benefit and not the opportunity to serve the people of South Africa (2017:13)
8. That since members of the ANC are desperate for leadership positions, they make use of money to buy their way up the ladder, thus replacing ethics with status (2017:14)
9. That the association or corrupt relationship of the Gupta family with prominent leaders of the ANC throughout the State Capture discussions generated the perception that the ANC is inherently corrupt (2017:15)
10. That stories of corruption in Government linked to ANC members has become the daily bread of South Africans as it makes weekly newspaper headlines, while at the same time there seem to be no arrest, prosecution and convictions of those who continue to benefit from such corruption (2017:17)
11. That the ANC has lost its unity and tolerate factionalism as its members struggle to speak with one voice nor develop coherent approach to matters of common importance and that this has made divisions and factionalism the reality of the ANC (2017:20)

In Summarizing this report, former president of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki at the Eastern Cape ANC Provincial Executive Committee three day meeting focusing on unity and renewal said

the diagnostic report by Gwede Mantashe highlighted that: “1. there was a growing trust deficit between the people and the ANC, 2. that there was a decline in the ethic, the value and traditions of the movement, 3. that there was a perception of the ANC as entirely corrupt, and 4. that the ANC had poor quality of branches. Mbeki further placed this report along with what the former and late president Nelson Mandela said in 1997 which was slightly 3years after the ANC took power, he said that: “one of the negative features is the emergence of careerism within our ranks, that many among our members see their membership of the ANC as a means to advance their personal ambitions, to attain power and access to resources for their own individual gratification.... They work to manipulate the movement to create the conditions for their success” (Mbeki, 2021).

Thus from this analysis, the policy conference is encouraged by the diagnostic report to find solution on how the ANC can reclaim its lost image in the eyes of ordinary South Africans since any failure to do so will result in further decline of the movement. As the result, the policy conference had to confront all these challenges and have the process expressed and articulated in the resolutions of the 54<sup>th</sup> National elective conference resolutions. One of such resolutions will become to be known as “The step aside resolution”. This was a reaffirmation of the 2015 ANC National General Council (NGC) resolution which state that ANC leaders and members who are alleged to have been involved in corrupt activities, must step aside until their names are cleared (ANC 54<sup>th</sup> NC 2017:76)

### **ANC Step-aside Resolution**

Various organizations from time to time sit in meetings at different levels to discuss matters that concerns such an organization. According to Rule 10 of the ANC's constitution, its National Conference is the highest ruling and controlling structure of the ANC (ANC Constitution 2007:6). This conference is held at least every five years, wherein new leaders or incumbents of various committees are elected or re-elected and important matters such as the policies, programmes and Constitution are discussed. The outcome of or decisions on such discussions are called resolutions. Within the interim of five years conferences, the ANC National Executive Committee which hold the office for five years, becomes the second highest structure with the authority to lead the organisation on a national level. This committee convene a National General council (NGC) regularly and has: “power to discuss any issue it deems necessary taking into account policies and directives of the National Conference” (ANC Constitution 2007:6).

At its 54<sup>th</sup> conference, under the heading: “Fighting crime and corruption” the ANC reaffirmed the resolution that was taken by its National General Council (NGC) of 2015 wherein leaders and members of the ANC alleged to have been involved in corruptions activities should voluntarily step-aside until their names are cleared from such allegations. (ANC 54<sup>th</sup> NC 2017:76).

According to this resolution, members who have been indicted either to appear in a court of law after being charged with corruption or other serious crimes, must step aside from their public office (both in government and ANC offices), pending the finalization of their cases. Those who fail to voluntarily step-aside or give an acceptable explanation to why they would not step-aside, will summarily be suspended in terms of Rule 25.70 of the ANC Constitution which states that in a situation where a public representative or office-bearer has been formally charged and is due to appear before a court of law should, for the sake of protecting the organization's image be suspended (ANC Constitution 2017:28). Commenting on this resolution, the former ANC National spokesperson and current Deputy Minister of State Security indicated that ahead of the 2017 ANC National conference, collectively its members appreciated the fact that corruption was rife in the country through the ANC as the ruling party. He further stated that they were fully aware that some ANC leaders within state power have been implicated in corrupt activities, and that some are already charged for various crimes





(Kodwa-eNCA 2021). Taking this admission further, ANC General Secretary, Ace Magashule explained that while the ANC might have seem be to defending both corruption and corrupt individuals ahead of the national conference in 2017, the 54<sup>th</sup> conference sought to absolve the ANC from such corrupt individuals or disassociate it from individuals who are corrupt. According to him, the step aside rule has two categories, wherein the first category is for those who are criminally charged while the second category involves those who are alleged in crime. Those in the first category must step aside within 30 days and those in the second category must appear before the ANC integrity commission to provide an acceptable explanation on their alleged conduct (Magashule-eNCA 2021).

### **Biblical Concept of *Thuma Mina* (Isaiah 6:8)**

In Isaiah 6:8 we read: "...Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me".

After Isaiah in a vision saw the Lord highly exalted seated on his throne (6:1), with his mouth he acknowledges his iniquities due to being among those with iniquities, resulting in the atonement of his iniquity (6:7) after the purification of his lips and thus immediately making him the prospective candidate certain mission. Immediately after the brief purification, then comes YHWH's inquiring call saying: "whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" which is immediately followed by Isaiah's affirmative response: "Here I am. Send me!" (6:8). With that being said, the proper theological analysis of Isaiah's response to YHWH's call can only be understood when read within its context in Isaiah 1-6 which sets the stage for the book of Isaiah in its entirety.

Isaiah chapter 1-6 is characterised by the YHWH's painting of Israel's wickedness by employing statements such as: "Woe to the sinful nation, a people whose guilt is great, a brood of evildoers, children given to corruption (1:4). According to House (1993) Isaiah 1-6 emerged from Isaiah's primary ministry shortly before Judah's wickedness could result in political danger (House 1993:209). The political danger that prevailed in Judah during the reign of Uzziah is impeccably described by Olanisebe (2015) who argued that irrespective of the material prosperity ushered by Uzziah's rule from ca. 783-742 B.C.E., the people of Judah (Southern Kingdom of Israel) continued to drift further from YHWH by violating his covenant, being led adulterated and cheap leaders who served themselves than the people, and engaging in transactions that benefited the elite minority to the exclusion of the peasant majority. And further paralleled Isaiah context with that of Amos during the reign of Jeroboam II (The Victorian Age) in Israel (Northern Kingdom of Israel) when there was an increasing gap between arrogance of the rich and the misery of the poor, which became: "a condition that made the old Israelite ideal of brotherhood seem an anachronism". (Olanisebe, 2015:485).

### **Thuma Mina campaign**

After the election of Cyril Matamela Ramaphosa as the 13th President of the ANC on 18 December 2017 at its 54<sup>th</sup> elective conference disposing president Jacob Zuma as the party leader and cementing his victory over his rival, Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma at Nasrec, Johannesburg. This victory meant that the 65-year-old Ramaphosa was faced with the likelihood of becoming the 6<sup>th</sup> democratically elected president of South Africa after the 8 May 2019 general elections if voted as the country's president by members of parliament in the National Assembly.

This happened after what some refer to as nine wasted years characterised by corruption and political cyndicasey under President Jacob Zuma's rule (Suttner 2019) or a ten year nightmare for many people in South Africa (Maluleke 2018) or as analysed by Nkosi (2018) an era of corruption and divisions. During this stage Ramaphosa could be described as one who tasted the good and bad days within the ruling party. From the days of his political activism in 1970s during students uprising in the country, being the ANC's Chief Negotiator during South Africa's

transition to democracy, becoming the ANC Secretary General (SG) in 1991 under the Presidency of Nelson Mandela, being the chairperson of the Constitutional Assembly following the first democratically elections in 1994 (ANC 2019). Ramaphosa served as the deputy president to Jacob Zuma from 2014 to 2018 and even witnessed as he embroiled in allegations of corruption since he became the state president in 2009, how Zuma was found to have failed to uphold his oath of office and even how he survived several votes of no-confidence over his performance as state president (Winning & Macharia 2017). At this stage it was clear to Ramaphosa that in order for him to win the hearts of South Africans in general and parliamentarians in particular, he first should outline his intentions to deal with corruption, poor performing economy, persistent racial inequality, rising unemployment, political divisions within the ANC, its moral regeneration and many other issues that would be left behind by the departure of Jacob Zuma from office.

On 16 February 2018 Cyril Ramaphosa was elected by the National Assembly through an indirect presidential election as the president of South Africa following the resignation of Jacob Zuma on 14 February 2018, after he was sworn in as the Acting president by Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng on 15 February 2018 at 5pm. On 16 February he delivered his first State of the Nations Address (SONA) as the dully elected president of the country. In his speech, he first noted some national concerns such as how South Africa remains an unequal society where poverty is defined by race, absence of economic growth, persistent growth of youth unemployment, constrained public finances, the increasing cost of living, the slow pace of land redistribution programme, poor or lack of service delivery, and saying the following on corruption:

This is the year in which we will turn the tide of corruption in our public institutions. The criminal justice institutions have been taking initiatives that will enable us to deal effectively with corruption. The commission of inquiry into state capture headed by the Deputy Chief Justice, Judge Raymond Zondo, is expected to commence its work shortly. The Commission is critical to ensuring that the extent and nature of state capture is established, that confidence in public institutions is restored and that those responsible for any wrongdoing are identified. The Commission should not displace the regular work of the country's law enforcement agencies in investigating and prosecuting any and all acts of corruption. (SONA, 2016).

In concluding his speech, dramatically invoked the Thuma Mina song by Hugh Masekela. The song is in the album called Sende Me which was released in 2002, eight years following the end of Apartheid (Maluleke 2018). On this song<sup>1</sup>, Hugh Masekela made a call to South Africans to jointly govern a change or turn things around. Maluleke 2018 is spot on in analyzing that this song was released shortly after it had become somehow clear that the "better life for all" dream was going down the drain and the general public in South Africa was characterised by disappointment, growing despair, increased violence against women and children, the rise of HIV/Aids pandemic and extreme form of poverty (Maluleke 2018). This is consistent with what is observed in Spiller (2020) as it is written that: "Thuma Mina debuted in 2002 and speaks to social issues such as the HIV/Aids crisis, violence, drug abuse". As if reflecting on the idea of democracy as government by the people for the people, Hugh Masekela sang:

*I wanna be there when the people start to turn it around  
When they triumph over poverty  
I wanna be there when the people win the battle against AIDS  
I wanna lend a hand  
I wanna be there for the alcoholic  
I wanna be there for the drug addict*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V-iBudsJFKE> "Hugh Masekela - Send Me (Official Audio)"



*I wanna be there for the victims of violence and abuse  
I wanna lend a hand  
Send me*

Scholars such as Maluleke (2018), Göranzon (2019) and Kgatle and Mashau (2021) are correct in observing that the Thuma Mina song has become popular within South African churches as it is sung in various languages across the country. In the words of Maluleke (2018): "There are as many versions of the song as there are church denominations and it is sung in different indigenous languages". The most popularly sung version of this song is uploaded by Sebotoma (2018) where the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Pretoria, Cathedral of the Sacred Heart's congregants excitedly sing and dance. While in South Africa this song has been adopted into various versions by churches such as the Bantu Church of Christ<sup>2</sup>, beyond the borders of South Africa, in the United States, Lincoln – Nebraska, this song has taken other forms where churches like the First-Plymouth Church Lincoln Nebraska performs it as a prayer<sup>3</sup>.

While president Ramaphosa mentioned Hugh Masekela by name when repeating the "send me" petition in this song, as one who is born and bred in South Africa he would be aware of the significance of the message entailed in this song in the hearts of South Africans. Thus reciting the message of this song, in addition to being rooted in Isaiah's interaction with God, he was fully aware that such moment embodied the revolutionary and loyalty spirit shared by the people of South Africa, in particular Christians. This moment did not only awaken his fellow comrades and MPs to the facts of their call, but it further inspired churches and possibly other faith communities. While this moment inspired change and renewal, president Ramaphosa believes in him being called not only to fight against corruption, but to implement policies like step-aside policy which seeks to uproot corruption in its integrity and for him to achieve the goal of clean governance he needs men and women who will join the Thuma Mina call. It was at this very moment that Ramaphosa was made into a counterpart of all believing people of South Africa including few amongst his fellow comrades who are destined to lead the nation with integrity.

Ramaphosa and those few others within the ruling party can be likened to few survivors that are alluded to in Isaiah 1:9, without whose presence, South Africa similar to Zion could have become like Sodom and Gomorrah. Just as in Isaiah 1:26 the Lord seeks to reestablish the Thuma Mina group as honest judges and wise advisers as in former times. Similar to Zion in Isaiah 1:21-23, it is tragic that the once faithful ANC which was the centre of moral instruction and lead calls for justice and fairness against the apartheid regime, has become a political prostitute with rebellious officials who love bribery and associate with thieves and have abandoned the cause of freedom. Similar to the pronouncements of Isaiah 3:12-15 essentially the diagnostic report was saying to his fellow comrades: "comrades, we have stashed in our houses what we have stolen from the poor people of South Africa, and we continue to mislead and give them confusing directions. Hence a few among them possess the moral dignity that is required when joining the Thuma Mina operation.

Once the appropriate theological attention is paid upon Isaiah 6:8-13 coherently joining YHWH's command (6:9-10) and commission of the prophet (6:8-13) compels one to expect the execution of this commission to be met with obstructions, unwillingness and hostility from some of those to whom the prophet is sent to. In the case of South Africa, obstructions will come in the form of Ramaphosa's own inequities, while the unwillingness will come in the form of the likes of Ace Magashule in refusing to subject himself to the ANC step-aside resolution.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s8DxSWkv2sl> "Bantu Church Of Christ - Thuma Mina (Audio) | GOSPEL MUSIC or SONGS"

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=axbo9Wqri5Y> "Thuma mina" (Send Me, Jesus)"

## **Obstructions to Thuma Mina**

History books are not blank when it comes to Ramaphosa's inequities. If the Thuma Mina commission requires one to have clean conscience, then president Ramaphosa along with his cronies might not pass the uprightness test. Through the history of time, there were number of allegations brought against President Cyril Ramaphosa. To mention but few, his role in Marikana Massacre, his business dealings with the state before his presidency and the CR17 scandal.

### ***Marikana massacre***

On 16 August of 2012, about 34 mineworkers from London Mining (Lonmin) mine based in South Africa in Marikana, formerly known as Rooikoppies, a town in Rustenburg local municipality were killed by the South African Police Service (SAPS) personnel (Boëttger & Rathbone, 2016:1-7). About 10 people had been killed ahead of this 16 August totaling the number of people who died in relation to Marikana to 44. This massacre can be compared to the Sharpsville massacre by the state in the old apartheid era when the South African police opened fire on a protesting crowd killing 69 people on 21 March 1960 in the South African township of Sharpsville in Gauteng (Pijoo, 2017). The role that president Ramaphosa played in this massacre keep resurfacing from time to time discrediting him as the suitable candidate for Thuma Mina mission. In his own words, president Ramaphosa described this massacre as: "the darkest moment of our young democracy" (Head, 2018). The massacre happened at the time while president Ramaphosa as still a non-executive director of Lonmin. It was reported that president Ramaphosa involvement with the Lonmin situation at least at two levels, first on 12 August 2012 when he contacted the then minister of police, Mr. Nathi Mthethwa asking him to deploy more police officers to Marikana and meeting. Second was on 15 August 2012 writing an email to the then minister of mineral resources, Mrs. Susan Shabangu describing the protesting miner's activity as a dastardly criminal act (Alexander 2017). His email to Susan Shabangu said: "The terrible events that have unfolded cannot be described as a labour dispute. They are plainly dastardly criminal and must be characterised as such. In line with this characterization there needs to be concomitant action to address this situation" (Patel, 2013). These interactions led to president Ramaphosa being labeled the "accused number one" in the massacre by critics of his role such as the Economic Freedom Fighter leaders, Julius Malema and Advocate Dali Mpofu (Bruce 2015). While president Ramaphosa apologised for his role in several occasions (Motau, 2017; Tandwa, 2017).

### ***Business deals***

Ramaphosa for a long period of time has become a respected businessman in South Africa and abroad. Since 2018 his estimated net worth is calculated at about R6.4 billion, and has held number of company shares such as McDonald's South Africa, chairperson of the board of Lonmin, chair of MTN board, Game/Cattle farming (Caboz, 2018) and own multiple properties (Capazorio, 2017)

While president Ramaphosa spoke against high political office bearers who entered into business deals with government since he argued that it encourage nepotism and undermines the integrity of public institutions (Tandwa, 2020). However, he too was alleged to have engaged private deals with government while he was the deputy president in 2015, shortly after Ramaphosa had written a seven page letter to ANC members pleading with them to quit their corruption conducts since this has led to the ANC being the accused number one in cases of corruption (Makinana 2020). In response, his predecessor, President Jacob Zuma pleaded with president Ramaphosa to stop accusing the ANC of corruption, but rather focus on corrupt individuals within the ANC including himself and further testing Ramaphosa to come clean about his business interests in government while he was the deputy president of both the ANC and the country (Cele, 2020). Bosasa, which ultimately rebranded to African Global Operations (AGO) after embroiling in accusations of corruption deals with the state, it was reported that





Ramaphosa's son, Andile Ramaphosa benefited huge amounts of money from this company as it received lucrative government contracts through the influence of president Ramaphosa (Mokone, 2019). Elsewhere, another allegation specified Ramaphosa had persuaded the Free State Department of Education to award a contract to Kagiso Shanduka Trust, a foundation Ramaphosa was the chairperson of to build schools in that province without advertisement and bidding processes being followed (Mahlangu & Mafisa, 2021).

### **CR17 scandal**

During the run-up to the ANC 54<sup>th</sup> national conference in 2017 as president Ramaphosa campaigned for his party to elect him as the new president of the ANC and ultimately of the country, shortly after former Democratic Alliance (DA) leader, Mmusi Maimane and the Economic Freedom Fighter (EFF) Deputy President Floyd Shivambu alleged that there is corruption in how Ramaphosa's campaign received funds as he lied about it to parliament claiming to have not benefited from such transaction (Masuabi, 2019), the South African public protector, Busisiwe Mkhwebane reported that Cyril Ramaphosa's 2017 campaign (CR17) received R500,000 from Bosasa with potential case of money laundering following the manner in which the transaction was done (Jordaan, 2019; Nicolson, 2020). Further, Mkhwebane found that president Ramaphosa violated his oath of office by misleading parliament by providing it with the incorrect information regarding the Bosasa funding (Manyathela, 2019).

### **Crossfire on step-aside (Ramaphosa v/s Magashule)**

During the ANC's 53<sup>rd</sup> national conference held in Mangaung, Free State in December 2012 as it focused upon organizational renewal, in order to protect the ANC's integrity by instilling discipline against its corrupt members reaffirmed the 2010 National General Council (NGC) resolution instructing the NEC to set up the Integrity Commissions (IC) at various levels such as national and provincial (ANC 53<sup>rd</sup> 2012:5-6). In March 2013 after its three-day meeting the NEC established the integrity committee as instructed by the NC (Ndenze, 2013).

The ANC current secretary general, Elias (Ace) Sekgobelo Magashule in his former capacity as premier of Free State, towards the end of 2020 he was charged with fraud, corruption and money laundering relating to R255-million asbestos irregular contracts in Free State (Du Plessis, 2021). He then volunteered to appear before the integrity commission while at the same time arguing that he is not corrupt, and further that he will not step-aside as party's SG (Shoba, 2020). Following the engagement between the IC and Magashule, the IC issued a report asking Magashule to step-aside or be suspended to protect the image of the party from allegations of corruption (Ndaba, 2020).

On 30 March 2021 the ANC NEC gave its members who are facing criminal charges a non-negotiable 30-day ultimatum to either step-aside or be suspended. Magashule was among ANC charged members with his corruption charges. Delivering the NEC statement, president Ramaphosa said: "All members who have been charged with corruption or other serious crimes must step aside within 30 days, failing which they should be suspended in terms of Rule 25.70 of the ANC constitution" (Modisa, 2021). After Magashule's failure to step-aside, on 03 May 2021 through the ANC Deputy Secretary-General Jessie Duarte, Magashule was informed that he is temporarily suspended from his position as ANC general secretary pending his criminal cases (Nicolson, 2021).

On May 5, while Magashule called his suspension fatally flawed as it was signed by the ANC deputy secretary general, Jessie Duarte who in his view has no powers to do so (Mlambo, 2021), in return he wrote a suspension letter dated 03 May to Ramaphosa saying: "I have also, in accordance with the powers invested in me as the secretary of the ANC, and in full compliance with the relevant conference resolutions, summarily suspended the president of the ANC, comrade Cyril Ramaphosa" (Hunter, 2021). Magashule argued that this letter is in line with the ANC's resolution on all members reported to have been involved in corrupt

activities (Nkanjeni, 2021). Further, Magashule informed in the same letter that he is formally appealing his suspension since he believed it was unlawful and unconstitutional. However, this was met with the ANC NEC upholding its decision and requesting Magashule to publicly apologise to the ANC's structures and members within 48 hours, another request that Magashule defied (Stone, 2021), while at the same time president Ramaphosa called Magashule's letter null and void since he had no authority nor mandate from the NEC (Madia, 2021). Ultimately, instead of apologizing for suspending president Ramaphosa, Magashule opted to take the ANC to court to have his suspension reversed (Dolley, 2021), and also arguing that the ANC NEC had no legal standing to ignore his suspension letter to president Ramaphosa (Amashabalala, 2021).

The conduct by Magashule or as some call it "the last kick of a dying horse" was seen as his attempt to give the impression that if he is deemed corrupt, then president Ramaphosa is no saint in regard to corruption since there are still concerns about his wealth and CR17 (Nicolson, 2021). This analysis is not far from the truth since in a letter itself Magashule mentioned the CR17 as the case of corruption against president Ramaphosa (Hunter, 2021). More broadly, his actions were analysed by others as looming tension, deepening the divides and political crisis within the ANC (Rampedi & Ndaba, 2021; Dolley, 2021)

### **Political catastrophe in South Africa**

The above analysis is but a mere indication that should the step-aside policy be fully implemented in accordance with Magashule's argument or literal interpretation of the 54<sup>th</sup> ANC national conference it will result in political catastrophe. Political catastrophe will be when the ANC as the governing party in South Africa witnesses an extreme form of division or disunity since its founding in 1912, when the political system experience a sudden shift which will result in an impulsive régime change, and when factionalism will play a central governing role unmindful of reversing the gains of democracy. While catastrophes normally come suddenly without warnings, most political analysts have warned against the political catastrophe that will come as consequence of reckless implementation of the step-aside policy.

The reality of this situation is that Magashule being a close ally of both Jacob Zuma and Supra Mahumapelo, has a large following within the ruling party. This is evidenced by his supporters who always support him whenever he appears in court, even in his absence (Maeko & Bates, 2021). At the same time, the Thuma Mina group led by president Ramaphosa seem to have the upper hand upon the ANC NEC. These two fact alone, shows the depth of division within the ANC, whereby the Thuma Mina group desperately wants to implement the step-aside policy in order to clean corruption from within the ranks of the ANC, while at the same time the Magashule wing consisting mainly of those who are alleged to be corrupt, would rather drag the entire party down with them or turning it into Sodom as opposed to stepping aside since in their view no one within the ruling party is righteous enough as with Sodom in Genesis 18:26.

The danger posed by this political situation is appreciated by Magashule in his affidavit indicating how critical his case is, saying: "To do this under a cloud of uncertainty and instability at the top will be predictably catastrophic. In this respect literally every day which passes edges the nation closer to a crisis." (Dolley, 2021). However, it will be a miracle if Magashule accepts court's ruling regardless of the direction of its favor since his political mentor (Jacob Zuma) declared himself to be above the South African constitution and the law by his adamant refusal to appear before the Commission of Inquiry into allegations of State Capture (Trwhele, 2021). His refusal to adhering court's ruling would result in fortifying lawlessness as his camp along with that of Jacob Zuma will suit by defying the law as and when it suits them. If at all tolerated, this situation has the potential to turn followers of Jacob Zuma, Ace Magashule, Supra Mahumapelo and the likes into future law offenders.



## Conclusion

God's instruction to Zion in Isaiah 1: 16-17 says: Wash! Purify yourself! Remove your sinful deeds from my sight. Stop sinning! Learn to do the right thing! Promote Justice! Give the oppressed reason to celebrate! Defend the widow's rights. In accordance with Kgatle and Mashau (2021), this paper supports the conclusion that, through the leadership of President Cyril Ramaphosa, the Thuma Mina group has the prospect of successfully eliminating corrupt elements from the ruling party through a fair implementation of the step-aside policy. Furthermore, similar to Isaiah 1: 16-17, the Thuma Mina group will only triumph over the Magashule group if they learn to do right things, promote justice, defend the poor people of South Africa and give them reason to celebrate.

This article outlined the state of affairs of the ANC as a ruling party in South Africa using the picture in its Organizational Diagnostic Report as presented by its former Secretary General Gwede Mantashe during its 54th National Conference in 2017. Secondly, it briefly directed its focus upon the ANC's step-aside resolution, its background context, meanings and the manner in which it is to be applied upon member of the ANC who are involved in criminal/corruption activities. Thirdly, it traced the concept of Thuma Mina back to the bible and further expand its understanding as it relates to campaigns by President Cyril Ramaphosa. Fourthly, it outlined obstacles which seem to disrupt Cyril Ramaphosa and his group from carrying the Thuma Mina mandate. Fifthly, it focused on what came to be a political crossfire between the Thuma Mina group and the Magashule group upon the implementation of the step-aside policy by the Thuma Mina group. Lastly, it made prediction about the looming political catastrophe that might be witnessed in South Africa should the Magashule group continue to resist party rules and further discard the step-aside policy implementation as it is sought after by the Thuma Mina group.

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