

## **AN EXEGETICAL STUDY OF GEN 26:1-33 IN THE CONTEXT OF WEALTH CREATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA**

Caleb O. Ogunkunle

Department of Religions, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.

### **ABSTRACT**

Nigeria has been going through a lot of challenges ranging from unemployment, poverty, and insecurity in recent years. The level of poverty is particularly high and overwhelming. This paper examines Gen 26:1-33 with the aim of identifying causes of the challenges in the nation and advocates for wealth creation for the teeming youths in the nation, in spite of the hostile environment in the country. A multiple research method of historical and exegetical is adopted in the paper. This is complemented with fundamentalist, macroeconomist, and developmental theories with the aim of making the study relevant to contemporary Nigerian society. It discovered that things were not easy at the time of Isaac in Gen 26, however, he obeyed divine instruction by creating wealth which led to multiple blessings. The study postulates that even though the environment for wealth creation is hostile in Nigeria, some individuals are doing well in their respective businesses. Therefore, both individuals and government in Nigeria should think of wealth creation and its developmental sustainability. The paper recommends that Nigerians should imbibe the principles of creating wealth as in Gen 26 instead of struggling with scanty job opportunities in the country.

**Keywords:** Gen 26, Poverty, Wealth Creation, Contextualisation, Sustainable Development, Nigeria

## INTRODUCTION

Nigeria has been going through a lot of challenges including unemployment, poverty and insecurity in recent years. The level of poverty is particularly high and overwhelming on the vast majority of the population. Incidentally, the challenge of poverty has been with the individuals for a long time. The Holy Bible says “for the poor will never cease from the land” (Deut 15:11). Jesus Christ says “for you have the poor with you always” (Mat 26:11). Unfortunately, the current state of poverty in Nigeria is making so much negative impact on the nation and her people that the thought of an average Nigerian especially, the youths is to leave the country for other nations in search of greener pastures. The pertinent questions are: why should the level of poverty in Nigeria be on the increase in spite of all the alleviation programmes being put in place by different successive governments over the years? How can we change the narrative of the ‘culture of receipt’ or ‘dependency syndrome’ to that of a nation with focus on sustainable development? Currently, Nigeria is regarded as the poverty capital of the world as 86.9 million Nigerians are living in severe poverty (Panchal, 2020). This paper aims at looking at various poverty alleviation strategies that have been implemented by successive governments and which unfortunately have earned the nation the uncoveted title of the world’s capital of poverty. It is against this backdrop that the paper advocates for ‘wealth creation’ rather than ‘poverty alleviation’ as an effective means of reducing significantly, the scourge of poverty in the nation. In other words, wealth creation and its sustainability is most likely to be of great benefit to the government and people of Nigeria. The paper posits that while poverty alleviation has not helped Nigeria; wealth creation is intended to make everyone especially the youths look inward to see what can be done to generate income using the exegetical principles from the story of Isaac in Genesis 26.

### Theoretical Frameworks

The fundamentalist, macroeconomist, developmental theories are adopted as theoretical frameworks. This is with a view of making the paper relevant to the contemporary Nigerian situation.

#### Functionalism/Functionalist theory

This is one of the major theoretical perspectives in sociology. It has its origin in the work of Emile Durkheim, who was interested in how society remains relatively stable by virtue of cohesion between different segments of the society. In other words, a society is a system of interconnected parts that work together in harmony to maintain a state of balance and social equilibrium for the whole. For example, each of the social institutions contributes importantly to the society; *family* provides a context for reproducing, nurturing and socializing children; *education* offers a way to transmit a society’s skills, knowledge and culture to its youth; *politics* provides a means of governing members of the society; *economics* provides for the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services and *religion* provides moral guidance and an outlet for worship of a higher power. Each of the segments depends on one another and failure of one segment will have a negative impact on the whole society. Thus, functionalist theory views society as an organism or human body in which all parts even though functioning differently, work together to contribute to the growth and development of such society (Mohammed & Osuala, 2014).

### Macroeconomist theory

Macroeconomic theory of wealth creation largely focuses on economic growth based on the observation that the difference between prosperity and poverty for a country depends on how fast it grows over time (Barro, 1999, pp. 236–277). Various economic growth theories have emerged over the years since the 15<sup>th</sup> century and these include: mercantilism, physiocracy, classical theories, innovative growth theory of Shumpeter and Keynesian theories among others (Sharipov, 2015, pp. 759-73). This paper adopts endogenous growth theories, which emerged in the 1980s based on the theoretical and empirical work that emerged in that decade (Romer, 1986, pp. 1002-37). Endogenous growth theories are an offshoot of the neoclassical growth theory, which emerged in the 1950s with the work of Solow (Solow, 1956, pp. 65-94). The neoclassical growth theory was built on the premise of achieving steady state growth without State intervention. According to the theory, there are three key sources of economic growth: (i) increase in physical capital through saving and investment; (ii) increase in the labour force through population growth; and (iii) technological progress, which is also referred to as the Solow residual or total factor productivity (TFP). The neoclassical theory does not offer any explanation for technological progress or TFP. Rather, the theory assumes that technological progress is exogenous and, therefore, independent of the decisions that economic agents, both private and public, make. Endogenous growth theories uphold the neoclassical propositions that economic growth depends on both physical capital and the labour force. The theories, however, reject the proposition that technological progress or TFP is exogenous. The theories then propose, albeit in several ways, that technological progress or TFP depends on one or more factors, including human capital development (through education and training), research and development, government expenditure, financial development, trade openness and institutions (Barro, 1990, pp. 103-125; Laeven, et al. 2012, pp. 1-24; & Mankiv, et al., 1992, pp. 407-37). Generally, the endogenous theories are premised on the following factors: (i) the quality of human capital, which depends on investment in human development (education, health); (ii) creation of necessary conditions and prerequisites for the protection of intellectual property rights in the conditions of imperfect competition; (iii) State support for the development of science and technology; and (iv) the role of government in creating a favourable investment climate and attracting new technologies (Sharipov, 2015).

### Sustainable Development

Literally, development is the gradual growth of something. Coccia says “development is a process of disproportionate growth of systems” (2019, p.1). As for Mensah, development is “an evolutionary process in which the human capacity increases in terms of initiating new structures, coping with problems, adapting to continuous change and striving purposefully and creatively to attain new goals.” (2019). Sustainable development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their own. According to Traore, sustainable development is “the struggle to ensure the existence of the human race on earth, focusing on the good management of the natural resources that make human beings’ existence possible” (2015, p. 73). He states further that sustainable development is working toward ensuring decent living conditions for the current generation of human beings without jeopardizing the living conditions of future generations (2015, p. 74).

The 2030 agenda for sustainable development, adopted by the United Nations has 17 goals. Goals 1 (no poverty) and 8 (decent work and economic growth) are germane to this paper (sdgs.un.org.goals). One of the main objectives of sustainable development is the provision of economic well-being for both the present and future generations. In other words, in sustainable

development, effort is made to meet the needs of today without compromising the needs of tomorrow. This is the reason why this paper is advocating for wealth creation in Nigeria instead of poverty alleviation which successive governments in the nation are involved in.

One of the theories of development which is adopted in this paper is called Dependency theory. It is based on Marxists ideology which focuses on the struggle between capitalists and the working class. Reyes (2001) opined that the theory which was championed by Raul Prebisch emerged in the 1950s from the research of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. The main argument of the theory is the persistent increment in industrialization in the developed countries at the expense of the poor countries. In other words, the capitalists continue to manipulate and exploit members of the poor working class and thereby making them (the poor) to depend on them (the capitalists) for sustenance (Antwi, 2018).

### **ISAAC IN BIBLICAL NARRATIVE**

The name Isaac means ‘laughter’ or ‘he laughs.’ Incidentally, at the announcement of his birth, Abraham laughed (Gen 17:17) and Sarah his mother laughed skeptically when the angel of the LORD announced to her that she would bear a son (Gen 18:12-15). Sarah, at the birth of Isaac, declared that God had caused her to laugh (Gen 21:6). On the day of his weaning, Ishmael laughed (Gen 21:9). Isaac was born when his father was 100 years old (Gen 21:5,7). Isaac married Rebekkah at the age of 40 (Gen 24:64; 25:20) and he became the father of Esau and Jacob at the age of 60 (Gen 25:26; 1 Chro 1:34).

Isaac, by character, was not as prominent and aggressive as his father Abraham and his son Jacob. However, he occupied an important place in the history of Israel. He was a gentle, affectionate, patient, sensitive, peace loving and God fearing patriarch (Scroggie, 1982, p. 117). Scroggie describes him as the “necessary link between Abraham, the root of the nation of Israel and Jacob, the father of the twelve sons whose posterity constituted that nation ”(1982, p. 117). Commenting on the brevity of the story of Isaac, Merrill says:

The reason for the brevity of the narrative concerning him may not be so much his lack of importance as his conformity to the will of God. He was not a life of bizarre escapades which made him the subject of much discussion. In silent obedient faith he pursued the will of God, carefully ordering his life as his servant (Merrill, 1966, p. 80).

### **EXEGESIS OF GEN 26:1-33**

Gen 26 stands out uniquely in the book of Genesis. It contains the activities of Isaac where he featured prominently. The chapter belongs to “J” source on the basis of various Yahwistic expressions, one of which is the name for God which is Yahweh or Jehovah or LORD. Biblical scholars such as Archer have argued that Gen 26:1-11 is a duplicate of Gen 12:10-20 and 18:1-18 (Archer, 1981, p. 131). Ross particularly highlights the parallelism between Gen 26:1-11 to Gen 12:10-20 as follows:

Isaac’s parallels to Abraham here are numerous: (a) a famine Gen 26:1 cf 12:10; (b) a plan to go to Egypt 26:2 cf 12:11; (c) the story in Gerar 26:2 cf 12:20:1; (d) calling his wife his ‘sister’ out of fear 26:7 cf 12:12-13; 20:2, 12; I the wife’s beauty 26:7 cf 12:11, 14; (f) Abimelech’s concern about committing adultery 26:9 cf 20:4-7; and (g) Abimelech’s rebuke 26:1, 10-11 cf 20:9-10 (Ross, 1985, p. 70).

Actually, the multiple account of the same event as noted above is one of the points for the Pentateuchal arguments against the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. In other words, it is argued that the Pentateuch contains multiple accounts of the same events, one of which is the Patriarch who on three occasions refer to his wife as his sister (Gen 12:10-26; 20:1-18; and 26:1-11) (Archer, 1981, p. 130). While it is true that Isaac like his father Abraham presented his wife as his sister and that he left home during the famine, it should be stated that each account in Genesis 12:10-20; 20:1-18 and 26:1-33 is very unique on its own. The famine at the time of Abraham is clearly distinguished from the one at the time of Isaac (Gen 26:1). Also, both Gen 12:10-20 and 26:1-33 are ascribed to “J” source while Gen 20:1-18 is ascribed to “E” source. Chronologically speaking, Aalders is of the opinion that Gen 26:1-11 is out of place and thus suggests that it must be placed between the time of Isaac’s marriage to Rebekah and the birth of the children recorded in Gen 25:24-26 (Aalders, 1981, p. 83).

In spite of the several similarities in Gen 26:1-33 to earlier accounts in Gen 12:10-20 and 20:1-18, the point in Gen 26:1-33 is to demonstrate how the blessing was passed on to Abraham’s descendants through Isaac (Ross, 1985, pp. 70-1). Just as Abraham had to leave his homeland in Canaan at the time of famine, so Isaac was driven from his home in a time of famine. The Hebrew word for famine is *ra‘ab*. It speaks of the existence of famine or hunger in the land, city or nation (Gen 12:10; 26:1; 41:30-33; Exod 16:3; 2 Sam 21:1; 24:13 etc. The word *ra‘ab* occurs over 100 times in the Old Testament mainly in the book of Genesis 41-47. The most famous famine in Isarel was the one at the time of Elijah when there was no rain in the land. In many passages, it is made clear that abundance and famine are both under the providence of God (Psa 33:19). Prophet Jeremiah sees famine, sword and pestilence as the three judgments of God (Jer 29:17). Ezekiel adds ‘fierce beasts’ to the list (Ezek 14:21) (White, 1980, p. 852).

Isaac left for the land of the Philistines to the territory of Abimelech, king of Gerar. It is highly probable that Abimelech in Gen 26:1 was not the same Abimelech in Gen 20 as the two events were about 90 years apart (Ross, 1985, pp. 70-1). It is most likely that Abimelech was a title like Pharaoh or Caesar. It was in Gerar that Isaac received a revelation from God and he was warned not to go to Egypt. Gen 26:2-5 says:

The LORD appeared to Issac and said, “Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land where I tell you to live. Stay in this land for a while, and I will be with you and will bless you. For to you and your decsendants I will give all these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham. I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring, all nations on earth will be blessed, because Abraham obeyed me and kept my requirements, my commands, my decrees and my laws.

The appearance or physical manifestation of God to Isaac was to instruct him to dwell in the land and there, he would be with him and bless him. The Hebrew verb *shakan* is used about 129 times in the Old Testament mostly in the *qal* form (Hamilton, 1980, p. 295). The imperative form of the verb is used in Gen 26:1 where Isaac was commanded to dwell, settle down and abide in the land (Brown, Driver & Briggs 1979, p. 1014). The word also means to settle down and abide (Num 24:2); to settle down permanently (Psa 102:29); to settle down and remain (Judges 5:17); and to remain undisturbed (Jer 50:39; Isa 13:20). Similarly, the Hebrew verb *barak* used in the text is very important. It means to bless (Brown, et.al., 1979, pp.138 -40). To bless in the Old Testament means to endue with power for success, prosperity and longevity (Oswalt, 1980, pp. 132-3). The person to receive God’s blessing must be rightly related to him while anyone who is wrongly related to him cannot be blessed

(Deut 28). Also, obedience to God is very much connected to blessing. In other words, God specifically blessed Isaac because Abraham the first patriarch had been obedient to Him and that Isaac himself obeyed the instruction of God by staying in Gerar.

In addition to obedience to God, Gen 26:12-14 emphasizes the dignity of labour as Isaac made up his mind to create wealth in the land. Gen 26:12 says “Isaac planted crops in that land and the same year reaped a hundred fold because the LORD blessed him.” The Hebrew verb *zara* which means “to sow or scatter seed”, is used in this context as qal imperfect third person masculine singular (Gen 26:12; Judges 9:45; Job 31:8; Ezek 11:4) (Brown, et.al., 1979, p. 281). Literally, the word refers to the action of sowing seed in the fields (Gen 26:12; Isa 37:30). Metaphorically, the action denotes God’s sowing or establishment of Israel in the land of Palestine in a future day (Hos 2:25). Figuratively, the word is used in connection to moral actions such as to sow justice (Prov 11:18), righteousness (Hos 10:12), light (Psa 97:11), wickedness (Prov 22:8), trouble (Job 4:80) and wind (Hos 8:7) (Kaiser, 1980, pp. 252-3). Closely connected to the word sowing is reaping. The Hebrew word used for reaping is *masha* which means “to attain, find or discover.” (Brown, et.al., 1979, p. 592). This means that after sowing, Isaac got to the farm and discovered that he had received a hundred fold of what was planted. Delitzsch recognizes this as “an unusual blessing, as the yield even in the very fertile regions is not generally greater than from twenty five to fifty fold” (Keil & Delitzsch, 1981, p. 271). Indeed, Isaac’s success was seen as a special blessing from the LORD. Isaac became powerful and wealthy. He was blessed and became prosperous to the point of being envied by the Philistines. The Hebrew verb *qana* which means “be jealous, zealous or envious” is used in different contexts in the Old Testament. It speaks of being envious of persons (Gen 30:1; 37:11; Psa 37:1; 73:3; Prov 3:31; 23:17; 24:1, 9 etc) (Brown, et.al., 1979, p. 888). The word is used in the case of Rachel towards Leah (Gen 30:1). It also expresses the feeling and action of the brothers of Joseph towards him after his dream (Gen 37:11). In this passage (Gen 26:14), the Philistines envied Isaac by filling with earth, all the wells that had been dug up in his father’s time. They even drove him away from the wells his men dug. However, in spite of the frustration and discouragement, Isaac did not give up.

## **THE NIGERIAN SITUATION**

Nigeria has all along been blessed with both human and natural resources since the pre-colonial and colonial periods. The country has plenty deposit of mineral resources such as tin, iron ore, marble, coal among others. The nation is particularly endowed with good land for production of food crops to feed her teeming population as well as cash crops which generate income for the government. In other words, the nation is essentially an agrarian economy with agriculture contributing significantly to its Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Even at independence in 1960, the contribution of agriculture to the GDP was about 60 percent (Kanayo, Nancy & Maurice, 2013, p. 44). Three of the cash crops include palm oil and kernels which were available in the south-east and the products accounted for about 81.5% of the total value of Nigeria’s exports during the early decades of the colonial rule; (Njoku, 2014, p. 224) cocoa which was grown in the western part of Nigeria and as from the 1960s, Nigeria became the third largest producer of cocoa; (Njoku, 2014, p. 228) and groundnuts which were grown in the north and by 1955, Nigeria was the largest producer of groundnuts (Njoku, 2014, p. 230).

With the giant strides made in the production of cash crops, each region in the country was able to make adequate plan for and execution of developmental projects and the sustainance of such projects. However, the discovery of crude petroleum which later led to “oil boom” appears to have been the origin of the current predicament of the nation. The regional system of government was abandoned for federalism. Thus, every region jettisoned her developmental projects and simply relied upon

the federal government for monthly allocation from the central purse which only worked for a short period of time. Unfortunately, the population of the country continues to grow rapidly. According to the 2006 census, Nigeria had a population of 140 million (Microsoft Encarta Premium, 2006) while the current total population of Nigeria, published by the National Bureau of Statistics is estimated at 206 million individuals (<https://www.statista.com>statistics>population>. Accessed on 06/02/2021)

Currently, the nation is confronted with numerous problems ranging from unemployment, poverty, and insecurity among others and with various agitations from all the geo-political zones. The causes of the current predicament in the nation can be traced to corruption, unemployment and poverty while the results of the predicament are seen in all kinds of social vices as demonstrated in terrorism, Fulani- herdsmen clash, banditry, kidnapping, ritual killing among others. The paper at this point discusses corruption and unemployment as the basis for the nation's poverty.

Corruption Perhaps, the root cause of Nigeria's predicament is corruption which according to the *Longman Contemporary English Dictionary* is defined as "dishonest, illegal or immoral behaviour especially from someone with power" (2003, p. 306). Isiramen opines that "corruptioon is a perversion of the good or a change from good to bad. It involves a purposeful violation of legality towards personal gains through patronage, favouritism, nepotism and other means." (Isiramen, 2010, p. 70). The world Bank defines corruption as:

The abuse of public office through the instrumentality of private agents who actively offer bribes to circumvent public offices and processes for competitive advantages and profit. Beyond bribery, public office can also be abused for personal benefit through patronage and nepotism. For example, the theft of state assets or diversion of state revenues (Isiramen, 2010, pp. 69-70).

Corruption in Nigeria manifests itself in diverse ways ranging from abuse of office or misuse of power by the public funds for private gains, to embezzlement of public funds, bribery, nepotism, dishonesty, cheating among others. Tracing the origin of corruption in Nigeria, Balarabe Musa argues that it started in 1966 when leaders started stealing government resources and thereby crippling the system (Musa, 2016, pp. 24-5). Currently, corruption in Nigeria has several coded names as highlighted by Gwamna:

The Police call it 'kolanut'; journalists call it 'brown envelope'; politicians call it 'welfare package'; pastors call it 'sowing of seed' and 'apostolic blessing'....Hausa housewives call it *pinche*, "cut"; Igbos call it, *akaazu*, "giving through the back"; Yorubas call *egunje*, "eat and swallow".... (Gwamna, 2008, p. 182).

Corruption is witnessed in virtually all the disciplines and professions in Nigeria. Unfortunately, religious organizations such as Churches are not exempted from corruption. A recent case is that of the secretary of Christian Association of Nigeria, Adamawa chapter, Mr. Anthony Elishama, who has been suspended for allegedly misappropriated N1.35m (*Sunday Punch*, 2020, p. 4). Corruption has had negative effects on Nigeria. As far back as 2000 when the then president Olusegun Obasanjo was signing into law the Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Act in Abuja, he said:

As we all know, corruption is a cankerworm that has eaten into the fabric of our society at all levels. It has caused decay and dereliction within the infrastructure of government and society at all levels. It has caused decay and dereliction in physical, social and human terms. Corruption has been responsible for the inability of successive

governments to succeed since the First Republic. Every coup since then has been in the name of stamping out the disease called “corruption.” Unfortunately, the cure often turns out to be worse than the disease and Nigeria has been worse for it. Nigeria’s external image took a serious bashing and our country began to feature on top of every corruption index (Isiramen, 2010, p. 68).

Unemployment One of the effects of corruption is high level of unemployment as few individuals in power have cornered the resources that could have been used to make jobs available for the masses. The *Longman Contemporary English Dictionary* defines unemployment as “the number of people in a country who do not have a job.” (2003, p.1570). Nigeria as a nation has many Universities (Federal, State and Private) and several other tertiary institutions that produce graduates in thousands every year. Currently, there are millions of Nigerian youths who are well educated but have no jobs and the possibility of getting one is nil. Unfortunately, the infrastructure or incentive for many of them to be self-employed is not generally available. Therefore, these youths at the end settle for ridiculous jobs where they receive less than N20,000 per month. As a result of unemployment, several youths in the nation are engaged in all forms of social vices- fraud, yahoo boys, kidnapping, thuggery, and cultism among others.

Poverty This is a helpless situation of lack of basic amenities of life. It is a serious challenge that is confronting the contemporary Nigerian society. The high level of poverty in Nigeria and its effects on her citizens are currently unbearable. Currently, Nigeria is regarded as the poverty capital of the world as 86.9 million Nigerians are living in severe poverty (Panchal, 2020). Incidentally, so much has been written on poverty in Nigeria. Akwara, Enwucnola, Adekunle, & Udaw examine the relationship that exists between unemployment, poverty and national security. They argued that unemployment causes poverty and poverty causes insecurity. And for the achievement of national security, they recommend restructuring of the nation’s socio-economic processes; making policies that will reduce poverty and unemployment; and accommodating the less privileged and unemployed members of the society (2013, pp. 1-11).

Aiyedogbon and Ohwofasa declared that for Nigeria to have been ranked 158<sup>th</sup> on the human development index is unacceptable. They made a strong connection of youth unemployment as the cause of poverty in Nigeria. They concluded that Nigeria is indeed a poor country with majority of her population wallowing in abject poverty. They recommended that holistic effort be made by governments at all levels to create jobs and arrest unemployment. They also suggested that federal and state governments should endeavor to convince the citizens to adopt birth control and that the real sector of the economy should be boosted to contribute meaningfully in reducing poverty in Nigeria (2012, pp. 268-79).

Chukwuemeka (2010) examines a general review of poverty in Nigeria and various efforts of government to eradicate it. He concluded that government should come up with policies that will eradicate poverty; credit scheme programme should be well articulated and strictly implemented; and most importantly, that the power sector be restructured since it would be difficult for small business holders to operate and break even without support from public power supply.

Lewu (2008, pp.157-74) highlighted causes of poverty in Nigeria and different alleviation programmes that have been put in place by different governments of the nation. She concluded that poverty, be it relative or absolute is a universal phenomenon. She is of the view that all the factors that militated against the success of alleviation programmes in the past could be avoided.

She recommended that focus should be on the educational and economic empowerment of women and youths, while agriculture should be promoted to make Nigeria self-sufficient in food production.

Oni (2011, p. 6) has made a strong connection between hunger, poverty and food security. According to him, poverty is the principal cause of hunger. Hunger is also a cause of poverty by causing poor health, low levels of energy and mental impairment. Hence, hunger limits people's ability to work and learn. Describing the poverty in Nigeria, Oni states:

Poverty in Nigeria is rated as absolute poverty for lack of any form of social security in place; no safety net of any sort. The incidence of poverty in Nigeria compares favourably with several other African countries that are not even blessed with the kind of natural endowment that Nigeria has. The incidence of poverty in Nigeria was in 1997 put at 70 percent, the same year that vision 2010 established for Nigeria a poverty line of 3,290.00 naira per capita. Although poor people are to be found in urban areas, the incidence of poverty is more dominant in rural Nigeria (2011, p. 6).

Ucha (2010) argues for unemployment, corruption, non-diversification of economy, income inequality, laziness, and poor education system as some of the key factors contributing to poverty in Nigeria. He is of the opinion that all these factors must be properly tackled for any meaningful progress on eradicating poverty in Nigeria.

Arogundade, Adebisi & Ogunro (2011) examine various government policies on poverty alleviation in Nigeria. They discovered that each government in an attempt to introduce her own policy gradually abandoned the policy of the other governments which at the end of the day has not helped the targeted people. They recommended a harmonization of programmes by asking the federal government to establish an agency for Nigeria which guarantees that successive governments do not discard their predecessors programme, rather, add their own suggestion and all programmes would run concurrently to ensure that all targeted audiences are reached.

The Bible has so much regard for the poor as "their poverty might have been caused through natural disasters leading to bad harvests, through enemy invasion, through suppression by powerful neighbours or through extortionate usury." (Nixon, 1982, pp, 955-6). Therefore, the Mosaic law has separate provisions for the benefits of the poor (Exod 22:25-27; 23:11; Lev 19:9, 10, 13, 15; 25:6; 25-30, 39-42, 47-54; Deut 14:28-29; 15:12-13; 16:11-14; 24:10-15; Ruth 2:1-7; Neh 8:10). In addition, Jesus' ministry is centered on preaching the gospel to the poor- Isa 61:1-2 cf. Lk 4:18-19 while much of the ministry of apostle Paul was concerned with raising money in the Gentile churches to assist the poor Christians in Jerusalem (Rom 15:25-29; Gal 2:10).

From the above literature on poverty, it is clear that poverty is both universal and multi-dimensional in nature. Poverty is the absence of the basic necessities of life for any person or a human group. It is the condition of not having enough resources or income. It is a lack of basic human needs, such as adequate and nutritious food, clothing, shelter and health services. Poverty is generally divided into three categories namely: absolute, relative and abject. Absolute poverty is the inability of an individual or a group to provide the material needs for physical, subsistence and protection of human dignity. These materials include shelter, water, health services, basic education, transportation, and work because the affected individual(s) have no job or income. Relative poverty is the inability of certain sections of the society to satisfy their basic needs. Abject poverty is a state

of being in which an individual is not capable of utilizing resources around him to improve himself or herself economically, socially, politically or otherwise (Akanmidu, 2004, pp. 2-4).

Individuals and governments at all levels in the nation have responded to the harsh effects of poverty. Individually, the key word currently for millions of people especially the youths is 'survival.' It is the survival instinct that has made many young people to be involved in all kinds of social vices- prostitution, ritual killing, robbery, yahoo boys among others. Olawale argues that the poverty ravaging the country now is the reason why young people are taking risks just to get out of the country (Olawale quoted by Makinde, 2018, p. 11). He states further:

To survive, [these] desperate Nigerians are ready to travel to Egypt, Libya, Algeria by road because they have discovered that it is easier to cross into Europe from any of the North African countries. They even travel as far as Kuwait, UAE, Dubai and Oman etc. The most shocking thing is that these people pay huge amounts of money and also take risks travelling by road and ships. But one has to feel for these young boys and girls because they face a lot of issues just to survive (Olawale quoted by Makinde, 2018, p.11).

Responding to the high level of poverty in Nigeria, each successive government over the years has put in place one poverty alleviation programme or another. Some of these programmes include: Better Life for Women; Family Support Programme; Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure; National Directorate of Employment, Mass Mobilization of Social Justice and Economic Reconstruction; Community Action for Poverty Alleviation; Family Economic Advancement Programme; and National Poverty Eradication Programme which is divided into four schemes namely: Youth Empowerment Schemes, Rural Infrastructural Development Schemes, Social Welfare Services Schemes and National Resources Development and Conservation Scheme. The poverty alleviation programme of the current administration of President Muhammadu Buhari is put under the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs. Unfortunately, each of these laudable alleviation programmes failed and terminated with the governments that set them up perhaps as a result of the greed and selfish interest of those saddled with the responsibility of writing the proposals and those who were responsible for implementation. In other words, the policy makers, politicians and career officers did not get the poor who were meant to benefit from such programmes involved.

## **CONTEXTUALISATION OF GEN 26 WITHIN NIGERIA AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS**

Obviously, things were very hard for Isaac as noted in the exegesis of Gen 26 which made him consider of going down to Egypt. However, he listened to God who spoke to him with specific instructions to stay in the land. He obeyed God and acted on the divine instruction. It is of interest to note that Isaac did not seek for 'poverty alleviation' instead he worked towards 'wealth creation' in the land. In other words, he did not wait on the Philistines for help at the time of famine. The Bible says he planted in the land and fortunately enough, things worked out well for him as he harvested a hundredfold (Gen 26:12).

Contextualising Gen 26 within contemporary Nigerian situation and in the light of the fundamentalist, macroeconomist, and development theories adopted in the paper, there appears to be some issues with the Nigerian society. As noted earlier, the functionalist theory argues that every society is made up of social institutions- *family, education, politics, economy and religion* among others and they must all work together in harmony to maintain a state of social equilibrium. In essence, it is expected of every unit of the society to function maximally for the promotion of order, stability and productivity. Failure in any unit brings about disorderliness, instability, unproductivity which leads to lack of meaningful development in the society.

Applying functionalist theory to the contemporary Nigerian society, there seems to be several challenges confronting the nation. There appears to be a breakdown of law and order in every institution- *family, education, economy, politics* and others which perhaps explains the insurmountable problems that are facing the nation. For example, in the educational sector, the Federal Universities in Nigeria spend considerable amount of time on strike and thereby wasting the precious time of the students. Also, the Universities (Federal, State and Private) and other tertiary institutions graduate thousands of students yearly with significant percentage of them have no hope of getting employment.

As for the Macroeconomic of wealth creation, emphasis is placed on economic growth resulting from the following factors namely, the quality of human development; creation of necessary conditions and prerequisites for the protection of intellectual property rights; state support for the development of science and technology; and the role of government in creating a favourable investment climate and attracting new technologies. Currently, these factors are not available as the government has not demonstrated the political will to assist the entrepreneur to strive.

Therefore, by application, this paper advocates that Nigerian government must replace ‘poverty alleviation’ with ‘wealth creation’ in line with Macroeconomic theory which suggests that every individual in the nation must aim at economic growth which brings about increase in the wealth of the nation. This means that the Nigerian government must make conscious effort to do the followings: creating of necessary conditions and prerequisites for the protection of intellectual property rights; giving full support for innovation through science and technology; and creating a favourable investment climate for individuals in the nation (Sharipov, 2015). Macroeconomic theory gives opportunity to individuals in the nation to think and be creative of what to do to be economically buoyant and thereby increase the wealth of the country. The position of this paper on wealth creation, is corroborated with that of Olanrewaju who equally makes a strong case for ‘wealth creation’ while writing on the International Day for the eradication of poverty. He highlights the achievements of different countries against what is witnessed in Nigeria. He says:

China lifted over 500 million people out of poverty in 30 years. India has also liberated 271 million of her nationals from poverty in 10 years. Other countries including those in Africa such as Rwanda and Botswana have similarly achieved great feats in reducing the number of the poor in their midst. However, the case is different in Nigeria as poverty is on the rise rather than on the decline in the country. The number of the poor in Nigeria has increased almost 1000 percent from nine million in 1960 to 87 million in 2018 (Olanrewaju, 2018, p. 29).

Differentiating between ‘poverty alleviation’ and ‘wealth creation’, he states further:

Poverty alleviation and wealth creation are similar phenomena which produce two different results because they have two different targets. While poverty alleviation is aimed at helping people cope with poverty through palliatives, the focus of wealth creation is to rid the poor of their poverty by giving them skills that would enable them to generate wealth on their own. These two phenomena deploy different strategies; hence the different results they achieve.....So, instead of poverty alleviation, we should be talking of wealth creation. Unlike poverty alleviation, wealth creation is not a quick fix. It is a long term project that requires proper planning and intensive investment (Olanrewaju, 2018, p. 29).

One significant advantage of wealth creation is its ability address the problem of insecurity that is plaguing Nigeria. With wealth creation, millions of youths who are currently jobless will be meaningfully engaged in businesses of their own and thereby reducing the number of those recruited banditry, boko haram and other forms of social vices (*Sunday Punch*, 2020, p.16). Wealth creation is perhaps a long awaited solution to several challenges namely, poverty, unemployment, insecurity among others that are confronting the nation.

Above all, the current government policy for poverty alleviation in form of *farmermoni*, *tradermoin*, *marketmoni* among others cannot produce a meaningful sustainable development. The objective of poverty alleviation is mainly to meet the immediate needs of the people but at the same time, it is jeopardizing their future and thereby contradicting the theory of development. It is high time Nigerians metamorphosed from the ‘culture of receipt’ or ‘dependency syndrome’ (Mawere & Chingozha, 2015, p. 146). The so-called poverty alleviation which has its root in the ‘culture of receipt’ produces over-dependence; promotes indolence and cultivates mental and material poverty (Mawere & Chingozha, 2015, p.146).

### **Recommendations**

Our study of Gen 26:1-33 in the context of wealth creation in Nigeria has brought about some recommendations that if considered will bring transformation in the lives of the masses in Nigeria. Therefore, the paper has specific recommendations for the government, society and individuals in the nation.

Government In order to clear the ‘augean stubbles’ of insecurity, poverty and unemployment in the nation, the Government must consciously create a conducive environment for people to strive. Therefore, political leaders, career officers and policy makers in the nation must convince themselves of the need to solve the problem of poverty; they must be willing to take the bull by the horns and be ready to take some drastic steps. In other words, the government must consciously determine to attend to the needs of millions of young people in the nation and thereby discouraging them from engaging in illegal businesses and all forms of social vices. Policy makers and career officers at every level of government (federal, state and local) must shun greed and selfish interests; they must have sincere love for the poor masses who are in the majority as they articulate policy statements on poverty. It is high time the government deemphasized the concept of poverty alleviation and focus more on wealth creation. Therefore, the government must place emphasis on technical education and thereby promoting entrepreneurial skills among the youths. In addition, government should provide necessary infrastructure and enabling environments for the young entrepreneurs to thrive and excel in their respective businesses. With wealth creation, there shall be economic growth which will increase the wealth of the nation. Eventually, government will generate sufficient tax to take care of key infrastructural developments in the nation.

Society The fact that things are not working well in Nigeria is obvious calls for the nation to have a rethink and allow things to work. Everyone, big or small, rich or poor, leader or follower must recognize the sovereignty of God and fear Him. Everyone must determine of what to do and contribute to the sustainable development of nation and not just what to get from it. The society must discourage celebrating thieves, looters and those known to have squandered the wealth of the nation. People with questionable wealth should be made to account for the source of such wealth. Once the government of the day pursues these goals by discouraging and prosecuting thieves and treasury looters, the 2030 agenda for sustainable development as adopted

by the United Nations on goals 1 and 8 would have been achieved. This will facilitate economic well-being for both now and future generations.

Individual Individuals in the nation, especially the youths must be creative and be willing to learn the principles of economic growth and thereby creating wealth which will eventually increase the wealth of the nation. This is not the time to wait for white collar jobs. Poverty is likely to continue if everyone will have to wait either to get a good job or reasonable financial assistance from the government. Isaac did not fold his hands at the time of famine. He planted and thereafter, he reaped a hundredfold as the LORD blessed him. However, individuals must learn to follow due process in an attempt to create wealth. Olawale observes “many Nigerians don’t like doing things legitimately because they can’t wait for the duration of the process. We are always in a hurry” (Olawale quoted by Makinde, 2018, p. 11). Due process must be followed.

## **CONCLUSION**

This paper has explored the exegetical study of Gen 26:1-33 in the context of wealth creation and sustainable development in Nigeria. The story of Isaac in the land of the Philistines demonstrated that life was not easy for him at that critical period of famine in Gerar, but on the instruction of God, he summed up courage to plant in the land and he reaped a hundredfold that year. He did not seek for any alleviation from the Philistines rather he created wealth. Contextualising Gen 26:1-33 to the Nigerian situation and in the light of the functionalist, macroeconomic, and developmental theories adopted, it becomes clear that numerous challenges are confronting Nigeria currently. There is rottenness in every segment of the society and so things are not working well. This explains why poverty is increasing in the nation virtually on a yearly basis. Therefore, the paper concludes with specific recommendations to government, society and individuals. As for the government, as represented by political leaders, career officers and policy makers at the federal, state and local levels must resolve to get rid of poverty in the nation by replacing the current poverty alleviation programme with wealth creation. The government must also provide necessary infrastructure and enabling environment for young entrepreneurs to thrive. As for the society, everyone (rich or poor, big or small, male or female) must have a deep reflection on the current predicament and chart a new course for the nation. As for individuals, everyone must be creative and think of what to contribute to the nation instead of what to get out of it. It is believed that the story of poverty in Nigeria will change if the above recommendations are considered and carefully implemented. The roadmap to sustainable development is the pivotal duty of both the government, the society and the individual as stated in this paper. With the positive resolve of all the stakeholders, vision 2020 though belated and 2030 agenda for sustainable development as scripted by the United Nations especially on serial goals 1 and 8, economic growth, infrastructural development, wealth creation and increase in Gross Domestic Products (GDP) would be actualized. This will bring about the desired sustainability in the nation.

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### **ABOUT THE AUTHORS:**

Dr. Caleb O. Ogunkunle is a Reader, Biblical Studies (Old Testament) in the Department of Religions, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.