

## **Responses to Economic Hardship in Genesis 41:36: Lessons for the Nigerian State**

**Rt. Rt. Rev. Janfalan Yusuf Ishaya (Ph.D),**  
Anglican Bishop of Ikara Diocese,  
shawainabuta19@gmail.com

**Nanlir Kartim Napbut PhD**  
Crowther Graduate Theological Seminary Abeokuta  
nanlirkartim@gmail.com

**Tolutope Oluwawole**  
Crowther Graduate Theological Seminary Abeokuta

**Rose Bulus Boyi**  
LAWNA Theological Seminary  
Jos  
rosebulusboyi@gmail.com  
DOI: 10.56201/ijrcp.v9.no4.2024.pg25.33

---

### **Abstract**

*This study explores the biblical account of Joseph's economic planning and management in Genesis 41:36 as a model for addressing economic hardship in Nigeria, utilizing a qualitative research approach with a hermeneutical analysis of the biblical text and a review of literature on the Nigerian economy and economic crises. The article analyzes how Joseph's wisdom and foresight enabled Egypt to prepare for and survive seven years of famine, and draws parallels with Nigeria's economic challenges through a comparative analysis. The study argues that Nigeria's economic crises, including corruption, mismanagement, and over-reliance on oil exports, can be addressed by adopting Joseph's principles of planning, saving, and diversification. It highlights the need for effective leadership, prudent economic management, and strategic planning to mitigate economic hardship and promote sustainable development.*

**Keywords:** *Biblical economics, Economic hardship, Nigeria Economy, Strategic planning and sustainable development*

---

## Introduction

Economic hardship has been a recurring challenge for many nations, including Nigeria. The country's economic crises, characterized by corruption, mismanagement, and over-reliance on oil exports, have hindered sustainable development (Adeoye, 24). However, the biblical account of Joseph's economic planning and management in Genesis 41:36 offers valuable lessons for addressing economic hardship. This study explores how Joseph's wisdom and foresight enabled Egypt to prepare for and survive seven years of famine, and draws parallels with Nigeria's economic challenges.

According to Genesis 41:36, Joseph's economic strategy included planning, saving, and diversification, which allowed Egypt to thrive during times of abundance and scarcity (Bible Gateway). Similarly, Nigeria can adopt these principles to mitigate economic hardship and promote sustainable development. As noted by economist Amartya Sen, "economic development is not just about increasing income, but also about expanding people's choices and freedoms" (Sen 23).

### Clarification of Terms:

**Economic Hardship:** Refers to a state of economic difficulty or struggle, characterized by high levels of poverty, unemployment, and inequality (Todaro & Smith, 23).

**Biblical Economics:** The study of economic principles and practices in the Bible, including teachings on stewardship, generosity, and fairness (Grudem, 55).

**Strategic Planning:** A systematic process of envisioning, planning, and implementing strategies to achieve long-term goals and objectives (Bryson, 12).

**Sustainable Development:** Economic development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (World Commission on Environment and Development, 43).

### Overview of the Nigerian Economy

The economic history of Nigeria falls into three periods. They are the: pre-colonial, the colonial and the post-colonial or independence periods. The pre-colonial period covers the longest part of Nigerian history. The colonial period covers a period of 60 years, 1900-1960 while the independence period dates from October 1, 1960 (Njoku iii-v).

Colonialism is a period or time where one country takes over the political control of another country with the intention of profiting economically from the resources of the weaker country and having dominion over the colonised nation. Colonialism can also be defined as a practice where one country dominates another country through subjugation of the weaker people over the stronger people (wikipedia).

It could be said that Colonialism is a major feature of the economic history of Nigeria. (The Colonial Economic) Even though it is believed that after independence, the Nigerian economy seemed very promising. Many saw Nigeria, with 15% of Africa's population, as an emerging economy. (The World Fact Book) However, this potential never materialized. A series of unfortunate political and economic events have stalled Nigerian growth.

The Pre-Colonial period was the period before 1900. The colonial period could be traced from 1900 to 1960, while the Post-colonial period is from October 1, 1960 till date. The pre-colonial economy is adjudged as the longest period of the three periods of the Nigerian economy. The paper will focus on the Nigerian economy from the Colonial period.

#### Nigerian Economy During Colonial Era

The economy of Nigeria during colonial days depended on three major export crops – Cocoa, Palm Produce and Groundnuts. According to Ahazuem and Falola, quoted by Adeyeri and Adejuwon the three major export accounted for about 70% of Nigeria’s total export during colonial times (Ahazue & Falola 3). The Nigerian economy during the colonial days was not too favourable to Nigeria which was a colony of the British. The colonial masters deliberately gained through the exploitation of the resources of their colony. “... the colonial government was mainly motivated by the search for cheap human and material resources necessary for the sustenance of British Empire” (Adewara i). The colonial economy in most of Africa was structured to improve the economies of the colonising or metropolitan powers. Colonial rule in Nigeria shows that it left more negative heritages than positive ones. It left behind a functional bureaucracy, a rudimentary educational system albeit externally oriented (Adeyeri & Adejuwon 1). The British Colonial Agricultural and Industrial policies in Nigeria have implications for the country’s economic advancement.

The policies in Nigeria did not encourage indigenous industrialization, whereas the main crops of the country were allowed to be exported, including mineral production to feed the British factories. Hence the importation of finished products from the British and European countries at the detriment of the economy of Nigeria. Adewara in the same vein said, there are three primary goals of British Colonial Economy in Nigeria. The first goal is expansion of Nigeria’s commerce via exporting of raw materials and importation of finished goods.... The second goal is closely linked with the first which is to bring the country into a cash economy based on Britain currency (Pounds sterling), while the last is to force Nigerians both directly and indirectly to work for the cash (Adewara i)

The colonial territory of Nigeria served as a ready source of cheap raw materials to feed the growing industries in Britain and European states, and also as trading post for the British and European traders and merchants, and at the same time supported the importation of end-products because the British wanted an outlet for her own manufactured products in order to stave off declining domestic consumption. And falling rate of profit at home (Adeyeri & Adejuwon 1).

Therefore, if Nigerian economy is unstable in development currently, it can be traced to the antecedents of pre-independence economic policy as the root of the current economic crises (Adeyeri & Adejuwon). From many independent African countries historical records, it could be deduced that “the achievement of political or flag independence does not automatically lead to economic independence (Yunusa, 131)”. This had grave implications on the Nigerian colonial economy, just as Adeyeri and Adejuwon recounted the economic operations of the Nigerian colonial masters activities which were geared towards organising and galvanising all human and material resources in Nigeria towards the utmost production and export of their nation’s cash crops to feed the British industries.

They said:

Poor Nigerian peasants were forced by circumstances imposed on them by colonial economic policies to ditch the production of food crops to focus on cash crops. From the onset, British Agricultural initiatives did not have much appreciable revolutionary impact on the economy of the region. With regards to the plantation scheme, its impact on the society was minimal. Nonetheless, its negative impact was that the

acquisition of the few acres of land for the establishment of plantation reduced a portion of the arable land for food crops. The people claimed that the land leased out by the local people for the plantations were most fertile areas. The

railways and other means of communication made possible the evacuation of Nigerian products to Britain and other European countries on trade terms decided by the colonial authorities, and, of course to the disadvantage of Nigerian

owners of the commodities. The value of such so-called exports as observed, was usually very high which shows that the fiscal or monetary loss which Nigeria suffered was enormous. The palm produce evacuated from Nigeria was about 66,000 tons in 1901; rose to 272,000 tons in 1921 and 497 tons in 1951. Palm oil alone fetched £ 981,330 for 110,243 tons in 1938. In the same year, 180,136 tons of groundnuts valued at £1,305,828 and 97,100 tons of cocoa valued at £1,305,828 were evaluated.

The greater percentage of this revenue was either sent to the Imperial Treasury or overseas banks as reserves or used in serving the colonial administration in terms of salaries, provisions of infrastructure and so on. (Adeyeri & Adejuwon 10 &11). Nigeria economy was adversely affected as a result of the British colonial agricultural programmes, which contemplated production of cash crops for export and nothing to promote food stuff production. As the British merchants or firms were getting richer, it also empowered the Nigerian elites who became mere instruments for the supply of Nigerian products to Europe and for distributing products from British and European manufacturing industries to Nigeria. This was an aspect of colonial economic dependence that was built in Nigeria to the continued disadvantage of Nigeria and her people (Aghahowa & Ukpabor 150). This has contributed majorly to the corruption that is prevalent in the country, and has by so doing affected the Nigerian economy. However there is still remedy.

### **Post Independence Nigerian Economy**

According to Adeyeri and Adejuwon:

Unlike the 1970s, a major feature of Nigeria's economy in the 1980s was its dependence on petroleum, which accounts for 87 percent of export receipts and 77 percent of the Federal government's current revenue in 1988. Falling oil output and prices contributed to another noteworthy aspect of the economy in the 1980s—the decline in per capita real gross national product, which persisted until oil prices began to rise in 1990. Indeed, GNP per capital per year decreased 4.8 percent from 1980 to 1987, which led in 1989 to Nigeria's classification by the World Bank as a low-income country (based on 1987 data) for the first time since the annual World Development Report was instituted in 1978. In 1989 the World Bank also declared Nigeria poor enough to be eligible (along with countries such as Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Chad, and Mali) for concessional aid from an affiliate, the International Development Association (IDA).

Another relevant feature of the Nigerian economy was an abrupt change in the government's share of expenditures. As a percentage of gross domestic product, national government expenditures

rose from 9 percent in 1962 to 44 percent in 1979 but fell to 17 percent in 1988. In the aftermath of the 1967-70 civil war, Nigeria's government became more centralized. The oil boom of the 1970s" provided the tax revenue to strengthen the central government further. Expansion of the government's share of the economy did little to enhance its political and administrative capacity but did increase incomes and

the number of jobs that the governing elites could distribute to their clients. The economic collapse in the late 1970s and early 1980s contributed to substantial discontent and conflict between ethnic communities and nationalities, adding to the political pressure to expel more than 2 million illegal workers

(mostly from Ghana, Niger, Cameroon, and Chad) in early 1983 and May 1985, which brought about the slogan "Ghana must go", that is, the citizens of Ghana had to leave the country. Between 2009 and 2019, poverty in

Nigeria declined by between 3–7 percentage points (wikipedia)

Nigeria, Africa's largest economy, has experienced economic hardship due to corruption, mismanagement, and over-reliance on oil exports (Adeoye 24). The country's GDP growth rate has been volatile, ranging from -1.6% in 2016 to 2.3% in 2019 (World Bank 12).

### **Economic Challenges**

**Over-reliance on Oil Exports:** Nigeria's economy is heavily dependent on oil exports, accounting for over 90% of foreign exchange earnings (Central Bank of Nigeria 23).

**Corruption:** Corruption is a significant challenge, with Nigeria ranking 146th out of 180 countries in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (Transparency International 12).

**Mismanagement:** Poor economic management has led to inefficiencies and waste, hindering economic growth (Todaro & Smith 145).

### **Impact of Economic Hardship**

**Poverty:** Economic hardship has led to high levels of poverty, with over 40% of Nigerians living below the poverty line (National Bureau of Statistics 12).

**Unemployment:** Unemployment rates are high, particularly among youth, with over 20% of Nigerians unemployed (National Bureau of Statistics 15).

### **I. Introduction to Economic Hardship in Nigeria**

Nigeria, Africa's largest economy, has faced significant economic hardship in recent years. This hardship is characterized by:

#### **II. High Poverty Rates**

Over 40% of Nigerians live below the poverty line (National Bureau of Statistics 12)

Poverty rates are highest in rural areas, with over 50% of rural residents living in poverty (National Bureau of Statistics 15)

#### **III. Unemployment rates are high, particularly among youth, with over 20% of Nigerians unemployed (National Bureau of Statistics 15)**

Youth unemployment rates are even higher, with over 30% of young people unemployed (National Bureau of Statistics 18)

#### **IV. Inflation**

High inflation rates have eroded purchasing power, with inflation rates reaching over 15% in 2020 (Central Bank of Nigeria 23)

Food inflation rates are particularly high, with food prices increasing by over 20% in 2020 (Central Bank of Nigeria 25)

Dependence on Oil Exports- Nigeria's economy is heavily dependent on oil exports, accounting for over 90% of foreign exchange earnings (Central Bank of Nigeria 23) Volatility in global oil prices has led to economic instability (Todaro & Smith 145)

Exegesis of Genesis 41:36:

Genesis 41:36 states, "And the people of Egypt and the land of Canaan became destitute because of the famine, and Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh, for every Egyptian sold his field because the famine was severe upon them; and the land became Pharaoh's" (Bible Gateway).

##### **A. Contextual Analysis**

The passage occurs during the reign of Pharaoh in Egypt, where Joseph has risen to become a prominent leader (Genesis 41:37-43).-

The famine has affected not only Egypt but also the surrounding regions, including Canaan (Genesis 41:57).

##### **B. Literary Analysis**

The passage highlights Joseph's wisdom and foresight in preparing for the famine (Genesis 41:33-36).

The phrase "the people of Egypt and the land of Canaan became destitute" emphasizes the severity of the famine (Genesis 41:36).

##### **C. Theological Analysis**

The passage demonstrates God's sovereignty and providence in the midst of economic hardship (Genesis 50:20).

Joseph's actions exemplify wise stewardship and leadership during times of crisis (Genesis 41:33-36).

#### **Implications of Genesis 41:36**

##### **A. Economic Planning and Management**

Joseph's wisdom in planning and managing resources during abundance to mitigate the effects of famine is a lesson for Nigeria's economic managers (Genesis 41:33-36).

Nigeria can adopt a similar approach by investing in strategic sectors and diversifying its economy to reduce dependence on oil exports (Adeoye 24).

##### **B. Leadership and Governance**

Joseph's leadership and governance during the famine demonstrate the importance of effective leadership in times of crisis (Genesis 41:37-43).

Nigeria's leaders can learn from Joseph's example by prioritizing the needs of the people and implementing policies that promote economic growth and development (Todaro & Smith 145).

### **C. Social Welfare and Poverty Reduction**

The passage highlights the need for social welfare programs to support vulnerable populations during times of economic hardship (Genesis 41:36).

Nigeria can implement similar programs to reduce poverty and inequality, such as social safety nets and employment creation schemes (National Bureau of Statistics 12).

### **D. Environmental Sustainability**

The famine in Genesis 41:36 was caused by environmental factors, highlighting the importance of environmental sustainability (Exodus 41:57).

Nigeria can prioritize environmental sustainability by investing in renewable energy and sustainable agriculture practices (World Bank 12).

### **Conclusion**

Genesis 41:36 offers valuable lessons for the Nigerian state in responding to economic hardship. Joseph's wisdom in planning, leadership, and governance during the famine provides a model for Nigeria's economic managers. By adopting a strategic approach to economic management, prioritizing social welfare and poverty reduction, and promoting environmental sustainability, Nigeria can mitigate the effects of economic hardship and promote sustainable development.

As noted by economist Amartya Sen, "economic development is not just about increasing income, but also about expanding people's choices and freedoms" (Sen 23). Nigeria can learn from Joseph's example by prioritizing the needs of its people and implementing policies that promote economic growth and development.

In conclusion, Genesis 41:36 provides a biblical perspective on economic management, which can inform policy decisions and contribute to Nigeria's economic growth. By applying the lessons from this passage, Nigeria can build a more resilient economy and promote sustainable development.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the lessons from Genesis 41:36, the following recommendations are made for the Nigerian state:

**Strategic Economic Planning:** Develop a long-term economic plan that prioritizes diversification, industrialization, and sustainable growth.

**Leadership and Governance:** Foster effective leadership and governance by prioritizing the needs of the people, promoting transparency, and combating corruption.

**Social Welfare and Poverty Reduction:** Implement social safety nets and poverty reduction programs to support vulnerable populations during times of economic hardship.

**Environmental Sustainability:** Prioritize environmental sustainability by investing in renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and conservation efforts.

**Economic Diversification:** Reduce dependence on oil exports by diversifying the economy and promoting non-oil sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, and services.

**Human Capital Development:** Invest in education, healthcare, and skills development to build a productive and competitive workforce.

**Infrastructure Development:** Develop critical infrastructure such as roads, bridges, and energy systems to support economic growth.

**Public-Private Partnerships:** Foster partnerships between the public and private sectors to promote economic growth and development.

**Corruption Reduction:** Implement measures to reduce corruption

**Emergency Preparedness:** Develop emergency preparedness plans to mitigate the effects of economic shocks and natural disasters.

By implementing these recommendations, Nigeria can build a more resilient economy, promote sustainable development, and reduce the impact of economic hardship on its citizens.

### Works Cited

Adeoye, Akinwale. "Nigeria's Economic Crises: Causes and Consequences." *Journal of Economic Studies*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2018, pp. 20-35.

Adewara, Sunday O. *Nigeria Economy During Colonial Era: An Overview*. Advances in

Adeyeri, Segun & Adejuwon, David. *The Implications of British Colonial Economic Policies*

*African Economic, Social and political Development*, in Rotimi Ajayi & Joseph Yinka Fashagba (ed.), *Nigerian Politics*, 2021.

Aghahowa, J.O. and Ukpebor E.E.M. *The British Colonial Economic Policies and Nigeria*

Ahazue, J.O. & Falola T. *Production for the Metropolis: Agriculture and Forest Products*.in

*Bible Gateway*. "Exodus 41:36." *Bible Gateway*,

Brueggemann, Walter. "Genesis." *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*. John Knox Press, 1982.

Bryson, John M. *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations*. John Wiley & Sons, 2018.

Central Bank of Nigeria. "Annual Report." *Central Bank of Nigeria*, 2020.

Falola T (ed.), *Britain and Nigeria Exploitation or Development?* London: Zed Books, 1987.

Fretheim, Terence E. "Exodus." *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*. John Knox Press, 1991.

Grudem, Wayne. *Business for the Glory of God*. Crossway, 2003.

Krugman, Paul R., and Maurice Obstfeld. *International Trade*. Pearson, 2009.



- National Bureau of Statistics. "Poverty and Inequality Report." National Bureau of Statistics, 2020.
- Njoku, Onwuka N., Economic history of Nigeria, 19th – 20th Century, (2nd Ed.) Nssuka  
on Nigeria's Development – International Journal of Advanced Research in Management and  
Social sciences, vol. 1, No. 2, August 2012- www.garph.co.uk. Retrieved 07-09-2024
- Recolonisation: A challenge for Critical Knowledge Production, The Journal of Pan African  
Studies, vol. 3, No. 3, 2009.
- Sen, Amartya. Development as Freedom. Anchor Books, 1999.
- Todaro, Michael P., and Stephen C. Smith. Economic Development. Pearson, 2015.
- Transparency International. "Corruption Perceptions Index." Transparency International, 2020.
- Underdevelopment, The Nigerian Journal of Politics and Public Policy, Vol. 3, No 1&2, 1999.
- World Bank. "Nigeria Overview." World Bank, 2022
- World Commission on Environment and Development. Our Common Future. Oxford University  
Press, 1987.
- Yunusa, K.S. The Political Economy of Nigeria and the Continuing Agenda of