

Ishmael the quiet,
thoughtful being of
ishmael.



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Ishmael - The Destruction Continues
Ishmael
The Biblical depiction of Adam and Eve's "fall" builds the foundation of Daniel Quinn's novel, *Ishmael*.

In this adventure of the spirit, a telepathic gorilla, Ishmael, uses the history of Biblical characters in order to explain his philosophy on saving the world. Attracting his final student, the narrator of the novel, with an advertisement "Teacher seeks pupil. Must have an earnest desire to save the world. Apply in person," Ishmael counsels the narrator through a series of questions that force him to stretch his mind.

Diving straight into Biblical allusions, Ishmael begins his lesson with the history of his evolution from "Goliath" (17) to Ishmael. He explains this evolution as a time of realization where he shifts from blindly accepting the infamous reputation of Goliath, an evil giant from the Bible, to the quiet, thoughtful being of Ishmael. After his brief history, Ishmael shifts his attention to the creation. "A culture is a people enacting a story" (41), and the story of the Garden of Eden opened up new thoughts on man's transformation from dependent to independent beings. When Adam and Eve began their lives on earth, they fully depended on the gods for all their necessities. Just like all of the other animals in the garden, they followed the philosophy of "leavers" and left the question of who should live and who should die up to the gods. However, the serpent, a member of the "taker" group tempted Eve with fruit from a tree that would give them the knowledge of life and death.

Eve, which means "life" (179) in turn, tempted Adam with the fruit. Although pre-warned that eating this forbidden fruit would kill man, Adam fell into

temptation and his desire for life. Through this action, his eyes were partially opened to the gods' vision. However, this knowledge ultimately would lead to the fulfillment of the gods' warnings that "the world's doom was assured" (166). After man's realization, he placed himself in a category separate from the animals and beasts that continued to rely on the world's situation rather than themselves. An allusion to the Biblical story of Adam and Eve's descendents, Cain and Abel continued the progression of man's shift from leavers, to what they are now, takers.

The taker philosophy that "the world was made for man" (61), epitomized their obstinate attitude that the universe was meant to be conquered and exploited by humans. Cain, a member of the taker philosophy and an agriculturist felt man's fate was in his or her hands. He showed these beliefs through the harvesting and storing of food. Abel, a member of the leavers demonstrated his philosophy of leaving everything alone except for what was needed in his hunter gatherer lifestyle.

Cain and Abel represented two cultures. When these two cultures clashed, the takers began "watering their fields with the blood of . . .

herders" (173). Cain took Abel's life because according to him, the world was made for human control. Humans could will life as well as death.

Slowly, as the takers and their philosophies took over the planet, they reemphasized the world's ultimate destruction. Through the passage of time, these Biblical stories, written by the leavers, have been accepted into the culture of the takers. These allusions enhance the consequences of the takers and their beliefs because of their philosophy that they are their own

gods and the world belongs to man. This philosophy has caused destruction.

Unfortunately, not many realize it, and the destruction continuesWords/

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