

Name: _____ Date: _____ Favorite Dessert: _____

Isaac and Ishmael Questions:

Source Text: Genesis 17:1-8, v. 16-22, Genesis 16. Genesis 21:1-21

Details, Motifs and Themes:

1. In Genesis 17:1-8 Abram undergoes a name change. God renames him "Abraham". What is the significance of this name change?
2. In Genesis 17:15 Sarai, Abram's wife, also undergoes a name change. What is the significance of her name change? How does this repetition establish a theme in the story?
3. So Abraham is an old man, and Sarah is an old woman who has been barren (unable to conceive children) her entire adult life. God promises them a child. Where else have we seen this theme established? (Think: Miraculous birth in unconventional circumstances...).

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4. In Gen. 17:20-21, God speaks of the future for Ishmael and Isaac. What is this telling of the future called? (What literary term/technique?) Why would God speak this way at this point in the narrative?
5. So Sarai wants to have a child, but can't. She gives Abram permission to conceive with her young, attractive servant, Hagar. Does Abram do the right thing here? Why or why not? (Gen. 16:1-4).
6. Why does Sarai become jealous of Hagar and her son, Ishmael? What does she do to them as a result of this jealousy? (Gen 16:5-6).
7. What happens to Hagar and Ishmael once Hagar flees Abram's household?

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Literary Criticism/Literary Theory Practice:

8. In this story...we get caught up in the saga of two sons...one who is illegitimate where Sarah and Abraham tried to make the promises of God happen through their own willpower. We have another son born miraculously through no aspect of their own doing. Each represents a choice and a side of human nature. What could each son (Isaac and Ishmael) represent from a psychological point of view? (Psychoanalytic Criticism).

9. When Hagar leaves Abram's household, there is an issue of how she will provide for herself and her child. How would economics drive her decision making ability here? What options does she have to make a living for herself on her own? (Marxist Criticism).

10. Jealousy, competition, scandal, and confusion are all at play within this story. What can this story tell us about our own personal emotions and motivations? What does this story tell us about human nature? (Archetypal Criticism.)