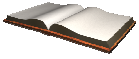


# Moses Little Brother Context

*The story 'Moses Little Brother' can be seen as both a political statement and a demonstration of the argument between faith and rational thought. Let's take the latter first.*



## A

1. Moses's little brother offers a practical, pragmatic solution to the prospect of wandering through the desert:

'We'll be out of here in no time — I have a map.'



This would seem like a rational offer under the circumstances – no need to get lost in the desert or leave it to chance. He has a map which shows the way to the land of milk and honey.

Older brother Moses, of course, is having none of that. His argument is entirely based on his faith that God will show them the way:

'No, thank you,' Moses replied, 'We have a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. We don't need maps.'

'But it'll tell us—'

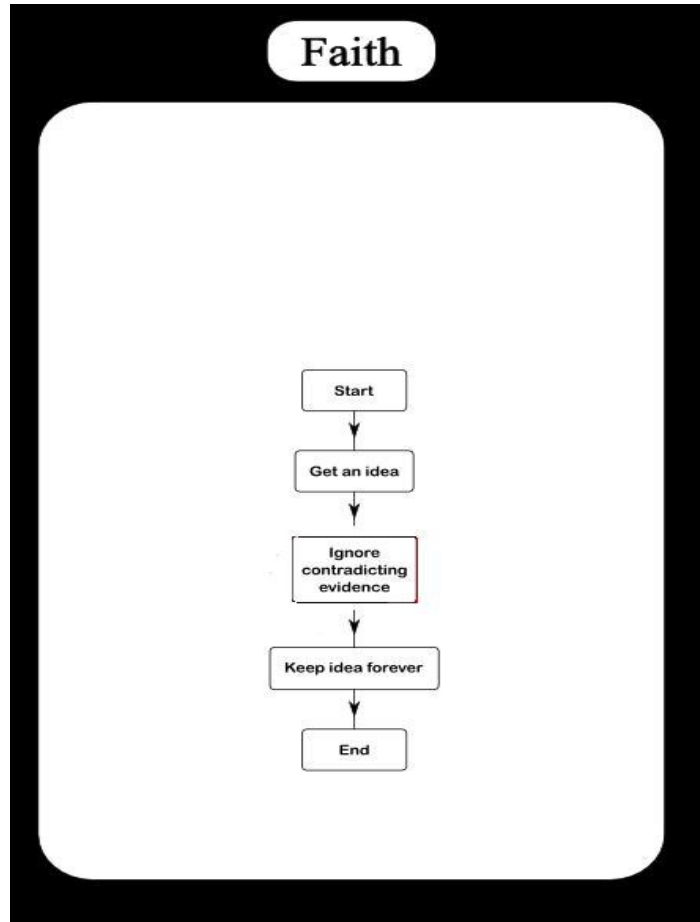
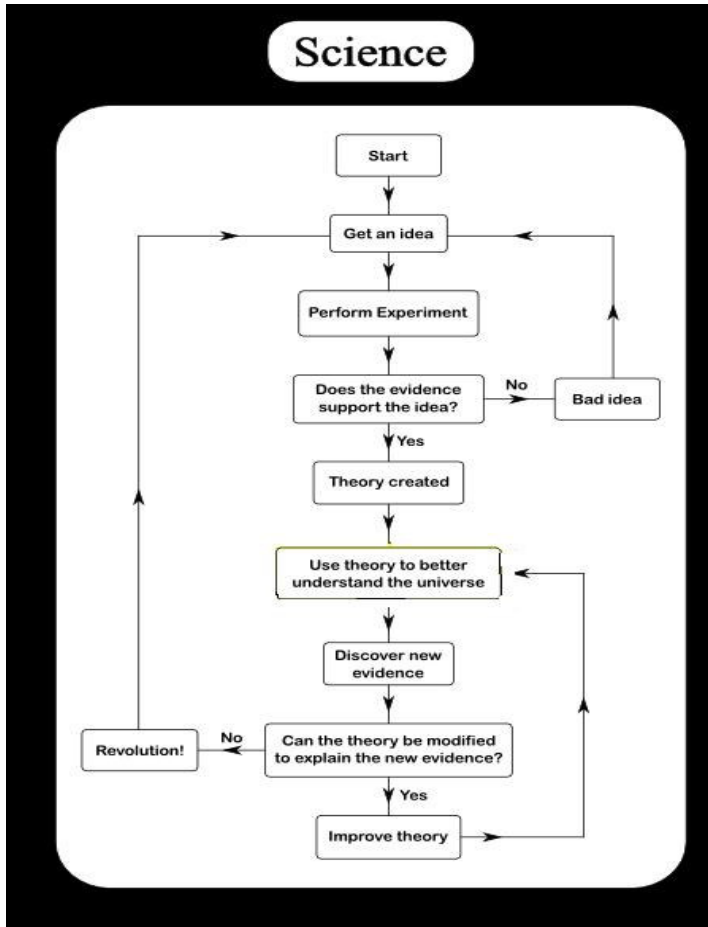
'When God wants to tell us anything, he'll turn into a burning bush.'

So, Moses – driven by his faith in God - wanders off into the desert with the tribes of Israel following, while his brother - armed with his belief in rational thought - goes on his own with the aid of the map (though presumably he had faith that the map was accurate!).





One commentator shows the argument thus (with science taking the place of rational thought):



This, of course, exaggerates the differences between the two approaches, which is far more complex. For example, the flow chart for 'faith' fails to take into account the purpose of faith in the first place, and seems to assume it is the same as for scientific enquiry. **Can you make a more realistic flow chart to support the argument for faith?**



2. The following statements are taken from writings by different commentators about faith and rational thought. The second sentence or part of the second sentence from each has been removed and placed in the box below. Read through each statement and decide which sentence is missing in each case. Then answer the questions that follow.

- As everyone knows, religion is based on Faith, not knowledge
- This thing had its primary reality not in myths or theology or doctrine, but in rituals
- The Universe is much bigger than our prophets said, grander, more subtle, more elegant'?
- Also, it is by faith that one obtains remission of sins and eventually can stand in the presence of God
- It seems to imply furthermore, that we “know,” for example, from scientific evidence that the earth is billions of years old
- Fix reason firmly in her seat, and call on her tribunal for every fact, every opinion
- One hears it said that 'God is the ultimate' or 'God is our better nature' or 'God is the universe.'

The lesson that both thinkers took from the Greeks was that you could subtract the gods and their stories from Greek religion without taking away the most important thing. -----  
-----; in moments that stand outside time, in which the loneliness and anxiety of the human individual is confronted and overcome, through immersion in the group. By calling these moments "sacred," we recognise both their complex social meaning and also the respite that they offer from alienation  
*Roger Scruton*

The maxim, “credo quia absurdum,” which has been pronounced by prominent defenders of religious faith and which means “I believe *because* it is absurd,” implies the antinomy between “knowledge” and “faith.” ----- . However, according to the above maxim, a believer may adhere to the notion that the earth is only about 6,000 years old, not because he “knows” that but because he “believes” in that, however absurd the latter notion may be in view of the contrary evidence; precisely because it is absurd from the rational viewpoint, its acceptance requires *belief*.  
*Mark Perakh*

We respect your learning; but there is one thing you do not seem to have learned: that God is a spirit and cannot be found through the telescope or microscope, no more than human thought or emotion can be found by analyzing the brain. ----- . Every thinking person, perhaps, is assailed at times with religious doubt. My own faith has wavered many a time. But I never told anyone of my spiritual  
*Letter from President of the New Jersey Historical Society to Albert Einstein*

How is it that hardly any religion has looked at science and concluded, 'This is better than we thought! ----- Instead they say, 'No, no, no! My god is a little god, and I want him to stay that way.' .A religion, old or new, that stressed the magnificence of the Universe as revealed by modern science might be able to draw forth reserves of reverence and awe hardly tapped by the conventional faiths.

*Carl Sagan*

Some people have views of God that are so broad and flexible that it is inevitable that they will find God wherever they look for him. ----- . Of course, like any other word, the word 'God' can be given any meaning we like. If you want to say that 'God is energy,' then you can find God in a lump of coal.

*Steven Weinberg*

Faith is a principle of action and of power, and by it is believed one can command the elements and/or heal the sick, or influence any number of circumstances when occasion warrants. ----- . All true faith must be based upon correct knowledge or it cannot produce the desired results. A lack of faith leads one to despair, which comes because of iniquity.

*Church of the Latter Day Saints*

Shake off all fear of servile prejudices, under which weak minds are servilely crouched. ----- . Question with boldness even the existence of God; because, if there be one, he must more approve of the homage of reason than that of blindfolded fear.

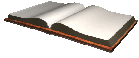
*Thomas Jefferson*

1. Are there any statements above which you quite strongly disagree with? Why?
2. Are there any statements above that you quite strongly agree with? Why?
3. What arguments, in your opinion, are missing from the above samples?



*In all cases be prepared to defend the reasons for your choices.*

**B. The reference to politics**



Whether they took the rational route or the route of faith, both routes led to political stalemate. At times it seems as if there is no more intractable problem at the present time than what has been called 'the middle east conflict'. The tensions between Israel and neighbouring Arabs are well documented and all too frequently make the news headlines.

Here are some voices from that region.

I know a little bit about the Palestinians from the news. It seems that they all hate us, but I don't know why. I have not met any yet. It is impossible for us to meet. We are separate people.  
Artov, aged 15



It's especially awful [at the checkpoint] when the line isn't moving, and nobody comes to tell us why it isn't moving, or when we might get through. The soldiers don't care that we are people. They think we are goats who don't mind standing around. But even goats get grass to chew. We get nothing.  
Mona & Mahmood, aged 11

[The soldiers] are very brave. Their job is to protect me and my family [in the settlement], and I'm glad they are around. It is very dangerous to live where we live. There are Palestinians all around us, and they are our enemies.  
Merav, aged 13



I see the bad things [the Israeli soldiers] do...They fly their helicopters over my city and shoot their guns at people. They want us to be ashamed of being Palestinian, but I'm not ashamed, I'm proud of it. I used to cry when I saw the soldiers, but I don't do that anymore...I would like to kill the soldiers, but I can't, because I have no weapons.  
Maryam, aged 11

**Three Wishes:**  
**Palestinian and Israeli Children Speak Out**  
by Deborah Ellis  
published by Allen & Unwin

.....It hurts how friends now think that I live in another part of the world just because we're separated by a checkpoint.

Again, it's not fair that all the countries get to celebrate a normal thing such as "strawberry festival" or a certain holiday or whatever's best about their country while anything we celebrate has to do with politics and it's always miserable. It's hard to explain what we're really going through. No words have ever been made to describe our sufferings but what's amazing about this is that we become stronger with every checkpoint we pass, every stone that is thrown in defiance, every plant we grow, every loss we afford and every hard time we pass through.



Israelis have taken away our childhood, deprived us from being children and thinking happy thoughts or enjoying playing like others. They crashed the happy places we've drawn in our minds, turned them to scary dark places, took away the light and left us with a dream and a huge imagination. ....

*Magne H, Palestine*

The roots of the Middle East conflict began in denial and so long as death and denial are the tools of the Arab religious and political leaders, the conflict will remain unresolved. Nothing that anyone can do, not the Israelis, not the Europeans, not even the Americans, can change this simple truth. After centuries of persecution and yearning for the land that was theirs, Jews in large numbers began arriving in Ottoman and then British-mandated Palestine to join and strengthen the existing Jewish community. The land then, as now, was rich enough and the people creative and dedicated enough, to have supported this influx. Even more, the native Arabs in Palestine during this time could have benefited from this influx just as the native Jewish population did. The Arab population could have joined in draining the swamps in the north and making the desert bloom. They could have joined in building a country that truly would have been the crossroads of the world, the center of commerce and travel and tourism and research and development. Instead, they denied the rights of the Jews to return to their homeland and did it with violence. Then, as now, the Arabs chose the path of denial. It is a mistake they continue to repeat year after year. And then, as now, the world rejected their violence and recognized the right of Israel to again take its place among the nations.

*Paula R. Stern, Journalist, Israel*



We don't see ourselves as a political project, but rather as a forum where young people from Israel and all the Arab countries can express themselves freely and openly whilst at the same time hearing the narrative of the other. It is not necessarily a question of accepting the narrative of the other, let alone agreeing with it, but rather the indispensable need to accept its legitimacy. We believe in only two absolutely necessary political ideas:

- There is no military solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
- The destinies of the Israeli and Palestinian people are inextricably linked and the land that some call Greater Israel and others Palestine is a land for two people.

Music makes the West-Eastern Divan possible because it does not contain limited associations as words do. Music teaches us that there is nothing that does not include its parallel or opposite as the case may be; therefore no element is entirely independent because it is by definition in a relationship of inter-dependence. It is my belief that although music cannot solve any problems, since it is as Busoni said "sonorous air", it can teach us to think in a way that is a school for life. In music we know and accept the hierarchy of a main subject, we accept the permanent presence of an opposite, and sometimes even of subversive accompanying rhythms.

*(West-Eastern Divine Orchestra)*





**Questions:**

1. If you had to choose two comments which carry the strongest message from those above, which would they be?
2. Which statements seem to reflect sadness and loss?
3. Which statements seem to reflect anger and hostility?
4. Does the final statement, from the West-Eastern Orchestra, offer any hope?



**Project**

Research opinions about the Israeli/Palestine conflict and present a paper that attempts to give equal weight to each side. Do not attempt to resolve the conflict!

The following websites might be a useful starting point.



- <http://www.haaretz.com/>
- <http://www.ynetnews.com/>
- <http://www.israelnewsnow.com/>
- <http://www.electronicintifada.net/>
- [www.imemc.org](http://www.imemc.org)
- <http://english.aljazeera.net>