



God and DNA Over Coffee

by Lisa Lipkin

Once again, my father and I squabbled over God at breakfast. "I just don't understand how I could have emerged from you!", I said. "DNA" he replied, as only a scientist could. "But why must everything be proven?," I asked him. "Can't God exist without the lab reports to back it up?" "It depends what you mean by God," he said. "To me, God is the sum total of all the intelligence in the universe. To others it's something else, something more emotional perhaps. Pass the danish." "But what about faith, dad? Can't you ever just take a leap of faith?" "Faith, kiddo, is anything where the evidence is missing. You got any Sweet and Low?" He was in a hurry to eat, he had to get to his lab on Second Avenue, where malignant tumors in glass vials were waiting for him.

"Then why be Jewish dad?" He dunked his jelly donut in his decaf, submerging it throughout his reply. "It's about belonging to a group. A family of man. As for the Torah? I certainly don't believe God came down in a cloud or anything. Moses went up there and scribbled it out. It's a nice set of moral laws. Get me my coat from the closet, will you?" I could see his mind was turning to other things, to electron microscopes and Bunsen burners, his bio-chemical mistresses.

In a last ditch effort to elicit a morsel of abandon from him, I resorted to using a familiar Jewish ploy -guilt and suffering. "But dad, you married a Holocaust survivor. Your mother's youth, her entire family, was stolen from her by the Pogroms in Russia. Does this mean nothing to you?" He lowered his head for a moment. When he raised it, however, I realized he'd actually been looking for a token in his top pocket. "Kiddo, it means that somehow mankind still has potential for goodness. After all, the fact that you're here is proof of that."

Is scientific imagination really so different than religious faith? I wondered, but knew not to ask him any more questions. By now he had already started to mumble equations to himself. He was somewhere in the clouds, with satellite technology or God, depending on your DNA. "Don't forget your umbrella," I said, and stuffed it in his raincoat pocket, although I'm not sure he noticed.

Just then my phone rang. I ran for the receiver and, from the kitchen, I could see him preparing to leave. He buttoned his coat collar, pulled a wool cap over his ears, and through no fault of his own, kissed the mazuzah in the doorway as he headed for the elevator.
