

# The Eclipse of God: Struggling with Faith in the Face of Evil

Rabbi Bill Plevan

## **The Eclipse of God**

What is it that we mean when we speak of an eclipse of God which is even now taking place? Through this metaphor we make the tremendous assumption that we can glance up to God with our 'mind's eye', or rather being's eye, as with our bodily eye to the sun, and that something can step between our existence and His as between the earth and the sun. -- *Eclipse of God*, p. 127

Yet I will keep my countenance hidden on that day, because of all the evil they do in turning to other gods. -- Deut. 31:18

## **The Word "God" and its Burden**

...(God) is the most heavy-laden of human words. None has become so soiled, so mutilated. Just for this reason I may not abandon it. Generations of men have laid the burden of their anxious lives upon this word and weighed it to the ground; it lies in the dust and bears their whole burden. The races of man with their religious factions have torn the word to pieces; they have killed for it and died for it, and it bears their finger-marks and their blood. Where might I find a word like it to describe the highest!...we may not give (the word God) up. How understandable it is that some suggest we should remain silent about the 'last things' for a time in order that misused words may be redeemed! But they are not to be redeemed *thus*. We cannot cleanse the word 'God' and we cannot make it whole; but, defiled and mutilated as it is, can raise it from the ground and set it over an hour of great care. -- *Eclipse of God*, pp. 8-9

## **Real Faith**

Real faith does not mean professing what we hold true in a ready-made formula. On the contrary, it means holding ourselves open to the unconditional mystery which we encounter in every sphere of our life and which cannot be comprised in any formula. It means that, from the very roots of our being, we should always be prepared to live with this mystery. The forms in which the mystery approaches us are nothing but our personal experiences. At times it is very difficult to live with the mystery, and to be constant to it in the midst of these ever new, unforeseen,

surprising, precipitating and overpowering experiences. But there is something which can help us and there are helpers. There is the living transmission of those who have really lived with the mystery, and above all those who are of our kind who had our tidings. They help us through the pure strength with which they experienced the mystery, faced it, and engaged their lives to it. For to believe means to engage oneself. -- *Israel and The World*, p. 49

### **Images of God**

Time after time, the images (of God) must be broken, the iconoclasts must have their way. For the iconoclast is the soul of man which rebels against having an image that can no longer be believed in, elevated above the heads of man as a thing that demands to be worshipped. In their longing for a god, men try again and again to set up a greater, a more genuine and more just image, which is intended to be more glorious than the last and only proves more unsatisfactory... The images topple, but the voice is never silenced. "You heard the voice of words but you saw no form." (Deut 4:12) The voice speaks in the guise of everything that happens, in the guise of all world events; it speaks to the men of all generations, makes demands upon them, and summons them to accept their responsibility. I have pointed out that it is of the utmost importance not to lose one's openness. **But to be open means not to shut out the voice – call it what you will. It does not matter what you call it. All that matters is that you hear it.** -- *Israel and the World*, pp. 50-1