

Final Class - Putting the pieces together

- 1) 'Why does the shattering of the vessels occur? For, as the Godhead provides according to Its capacity, while the recipient is limited, the benefit would thus be limited as well. That is why He provides influence without limit according to His aspect...even though the created recipient cannot receive it without shattering completely and then rebuilding himself through his desire to return to his unbounded source...and thus the created can make himself and attain the perfection of a creator and transcend the limitations of the created.' (Rabbi Kook, Orot HaKodesh, vol 2, 627)
- 2) "Indeed one can discern a similar process in postmodernism. As we know, deconstruction aims to shatter all the vessels, claiming that reality in its entirety – facts as well as metaphors and language- is nothing but a human construct. Furthermore, human creative works are never brought forth ex nihilo, but are always adaptations of elements from earlier works which is why every such creation can be deconstructed and then reconstructed differently. On a kabbalistic level we might say that this shattering of the vessels is not final but instead purifies the vessels, allowing man to use their shards as building blocks for a new world. Truly, the role of deconstruction is to dismantle the vessels and make them supple, thus opening up new pathways for inspiration and illumination." (Shagar, *Faith Shattered and Restored*, p 128)
- 3) "It is important to note that the shattering of the vessels - when the overarching truth is gone and only language games remain – can lead to nihilism and moral paralysis. To avoid such a state, we must imbue our language games with inspiration. Therein is another link between postmodernism and mysticism...between the philosophy of language games in which there is no absolute truth – not because we have not discovered it, but because there is no 'material' from which to fashion such a truth – and a mystical conception that all is truth and all is God, that 'no place is empty of him'. The difference between a mystical consciousness and a secularized, postmodern consciousness lies in one's willingness to open up to inspiration, to break out of one's bewildered paralysis in the face of the countless possible language games – in other words to go beyond the anthropological stance of studying the tribe without joining it... The self-consciousness of the postmodern observer prevents him from joining in the dance of the tribespeople, because so he asks himself, Why this dance and not another? (Footnote: One is reminded of Buridan's ass, a hypothetical creature that placed equidistant from a bale of hay and a pail of water, will perish of hunger and thirst because it cannot decide whether to eat first or to drink first)...If a postmodern person however can choose one of the options despite being aware that it is socially constructed, the very absence of absolute truth will be able to imbue his choice with mystical elation.....In a religious context, postmodernism enables one to accept the yoke of the kingdom of heaven in a whole new sense, to see in faith an absolute decision with the capacity to create a new vessel by which to reveal the divine light." (*ibid*, p 129)
- 4) "The faith that has been described here exists as a fragment, a psycho-theological symptom of an unexplained stubbornness; a readiness to be the 'fryer' ('mug') of the world through the statement "I am such and such and I want to be so", with any fathomable explanation. This is the deep meaning of the phrase 'Guardian of the Covenant'(שמירת הברית)...the full acceptance of a person of himself and with whom and what he is. This is a fullness through which a person doesn't confine himself into any one place or stance, he can be what he is, in any place he finds himself."