

## PARSHAT VAYAKHEIL

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The name of this week's Parsha, **ויקהל**, is one of those words that means something special and is hard to convey in one English equivalent: it could be translated as gathered, assembled... but it is really the verb that goes with “kahal”: He made them into a kehillah, a *community*. *How did God make the Children of Yisrael into a kehilah?*

He asked them each to contribute what they could to a big, beautiful and holy project: **קָחוּ מֵאִתְּכֶם תְּרוּמָה לַיהוָה**

There were so many ways to give something of yourself to the project of the mishkan: **וְכָל-אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר-נִמְצָא אֹתוֹ תְּכֵלֶת וְאַרְגָּמָן וְתוֹלַעַת שָׁנִי וְשֵׁשׁ וְעִזִּים וְעֹרֹת אֵילִם מְאֻדָּמִים** There were so many different *materials needed... and you might have one of them! I imagine each family looking through their tent, each man, woman and child looking through their little pile of stuff, to find the special material they might be able to contribute.*

There was also a call for *wisdoms of the heart*— **כָּל-חָכֹם-לֵב בְּכֶם יָבֹאוּ וַיַּעֲשׂוּ אֶת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר** -- *ways of being creative or inspired with art and with your hands. I imagine each person thinking about their special skill or creative gifts—looking for the special thing they do which they could contribute.*

And there was a call for *generosity of the heart*: **וְכָל נָדִיב לִבּוֹ יְבִיאָהּ אֶת תְּרוּמַת יְהוָה**: *each person was moved to find that spirit in their heart and give something from themselves. Anyone at all could give—all they needed was generosity of the heart.*

After Moshe asked them to give of themselves—each person was so inspired to give! Everyone whose heart lifted him and whose spirit moved him to give! The leaders brought the special stones and spices and oils. Every woman who had the *wisdom of heart in their hands spun the goat hair and wove the different materials—the blue and purple, crimson and linen—needed for the mishkan.*

But then, Moshe says to the people “ **וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה בְּשֵׁם בְּצַלְאֵל** See, God has called upon Betzalel,” ..... “ **וַיִּמְלֵא אוֹתוֹ רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים בְּחָכְמָה בְּתַבּוּנָה** and filled him with the spirit of God with wisdom, with insight, and with knowledge, and with talent for craft and weaving with gold and silver and copper....” and he’s going to make all the amazing stuff for our holy project.

This call of Betzalel might deflate ordinary people: I thought I could contribute my special gifts—I thought I was really needed... I was excited to think about what I could contribute, the special things I could do. But now it seems Betzalel is really the one with special knowledge and skills. Maybe what I do isn't so important after all.

But then, we hear what is really special about Betzalel:

וְלִהְיוֹת נֶמֶן בְּלִבּוֹ יְהוָה וְאֶהְיֶאֱבֹב בֶּן־אֲחִיסָמֶךְ לְמִטָּה־דָן

***God put into his heart the spirit and ability to teach.***

He and the other inspired teachers could guide each person who wanted to learn and create. And they did, and because of that, everyone worked together to create the special Mishkan with all its different materials and colors and structures.

Of all the amazing materials for the Mishkan—the gold, silver, copper, crimson, purples and blues, the special oils and spices, the special woods... the essential element which allowed every individual to find their own special gifts and bring them to create together, to build this big, beautiful, holy project, were *teachers*.

And that is how the children of Yisrael became a Kehillah, a community.