



Menu Madness Parshat Lech Lecha

With stars and sand and covenants with God, your Shabbat table will sparkle this week!

This week the Torah reading shifts from the global experience to the more particular Jewish experience narrated through the treks and trials of our ancestors Abram and Sarai (who at the end of the parashah have the letter "hey" added by God to their names and they are transformed into Abraham and Sarah).

The parashah is filled with promises that God makes to Abram/Abraham. One of these promises--expressed in the parashah in two different ways--will be the basis of our Friday night Shabbat dinner. On two separate occasions, God reiterates the promise to create a great nation from Abraham. In Bereishit 13:16 God says, " And I will make your seed as the sand of the earth; so that if a person can count the sand of the earth, then shall your seed also be counted." Similarly, God promises Abraham, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars, if you are able to count them....So shall your seed be" (Bereishit 15:5). Sand and stars are powerful metaphors with which to work. I can't wait for Shabbat dinner!

Stars are the easy part. In the U.S. at this time of year, there are a multitude of shiny star items available in craft stores and grocery stores. Our Shabbat table will be set with silver coasters laden with stars and star-shaped place cards; metallic star garlands will be draped from our chandelier; and we will serve parts of the meal in silver boxes adorned with stars and a silver star-shaped basket. (BTW, the coasters and the silver boxes were dollar store purchase.)

For the meal itself, our salad will have vegetables cut with star shaped cookie cutters (great for peppers and raw zucchini) and I will make kugels in star shaped foil pans I found. Family Fun magazine also has a recipe for star shaped watermelon "pops."

Sand will be featured in the meal as well. Couscous is grainy and sand-like and will be the featured starch at Shabbat dinner. Besides, no one can count the grains of couscous that my toddler can drop on the floor--a clear allusion to God's promise. Sand will also be the guest star for dessert; I'm working on

adapting a sand dessert recipe that uses vanilla wafers and pudding to create a sandscape.

For Shabbat lunch, we will go in a different direction: celebrating Abraham's covenant with God. So, our meal will start with the traditional food served at a brit milah (at least nowadays!). We're serving bagel chips, smoked salmon, sliced veggies, and dollops of pareve cream cheese as the appetizer.

Dessert consists of a flip flop cake, designed to look like sandals that Abraham might have worn when he walked the length and breadth of the land of Canaan. I have adorable footprint confetti and great street sign stickers that I will use to decorate the table.

I hope that these meal ideas will give our Shabbat guests a lot of food for thought.

Tammie Zaks Rapps creates menu plans that reflect each week's Torah reading. Tammie feels that "Themed Shabbat meals allow us to focus on the Parashat HaShavua in an engaging and dynamic way." Check out Tammie's blog at parashahmom.blogspot.com and follow her here on ChallahCrumbs!

