



MenuMadness: BaMidbar Camping Gear

This week's parashah begins with details about Bnei Yisrael's travels in the desert. After Moshe conducts a census of the adult males in Bnei Yisrael, the Torah maps out the encampment that would be "home" for them throughout their journey to the Land of Israel. With the tabernacle in the middle surrounded by the tribe of Levi, the remaining twelve tribes (yes, twelve--Yosef is split in two) built their camps on the four sides of the Mishkan. The Torah delineates the positions of each of the tribes. Our Shabbat table and our Shabbat dinner will both, hopefully, be replicas of the encampment. To set the table, the challot will be in the center of the table covered by beautiful cloths, representing the Mishkan. I will tie red, white, and black ribbons around small vases of flowers to and place them around the challot. (Shevet Levi's flag is described as one third red, one third white, and one third black.) Then, although our table isn't square, I will set three settings on each of the four sides and label the sides with the four directions. At the place settings, I will fold a napkin in the color associated with the given tribe for that location.

To the East:

Yehudah (light blue), Yissaschar (dark grey), and Zevulun (white)

To the South:

Reuven (red), Shimon (green), and Gad (grey)

To the West:

Binyamin (rainbow), Ephraim (black), and Menashe (black)

To the North:

Dan (sapphire blue), Asher (pearlescent), and Naftali (deep red)

The meal itself will also replicate the encampment. When it is time to serve, we will lay the food out in a similar fashion. In the center of the table will be the protein—to symbolize the sacrificial offerings brought in the Mishkan. The serving pieces for the meal will be arranged around the meat, representing the Leviim who served in the Mishkan. For each tribe surrounding the Mishkan, there will be a food that either relates to the tribe's color or the image on its flag. Each food will be placed in the appropriate direction:

Yehudah—a blue mocktail; Yissaschar—sunburst of yellow and orange veggies; Zevulun—white potatoes; Reuven—red gazpacho; Shimon—green broccoli; Gad—cucumber chunks standing at attention; Binyamin—tossed salad; Ephraim and Menashe—blackened chicken; Dan—pareve blueberry jell salad; Asher—olives (for the tree on his flag); Naftali—deep red beet salad

That's the ambitious plan for this Shabbat.

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!