Blessings at the Table

Peace to You

Peace to you, attending angels, messengers of the Most High, the Supreme Ruler, the Blessed Holy One.

Come in peace, angels of peace, messengers of the Most High, the Supreme Ruler, the Blessed Holy One.

Bless me with peace, angels of peace, messengers of the Most High, the Supreme Ruler, the Blessed Holy One.

Go in peace, angels of peace, messengers of the Most High, the Supreme Ruler, the Blessed Holy One.

This practice was introduced by the mystics of Tzfat (Safed) in the sixteenth century. According to the Zohar Chadash: When coming home from the synagogue on Friday evening, a person is accompanied by angels on either side, and the Sh'chinah oversees them, as does a mother with her children. When the Sh'chinah sees the candles burning and the table set, and the family together in happiness and peace, the Sh'chinah says, "This is mine, Israel in whom I take pride."

This story, which has its origins in the Talmud (Shabbat, 119b) has here been transformed.

A Chasidic interpretation suggests that just as Jacob had two camps of angels watching over him (one when he was inside, and another when he was outside the land of Israel), there are two groups of angels watching over us as well: those that watch over us during the week and those that watch over us on Shabbat. We say Shalom Aleichem to welcome the Sabbath angels, and Tzeitchem Tisha'om to bid farewell to the weekday angels, who can now celebrate Shabbat knowing that we are in good care.

Some communities may also sing Shalom Aleichem at the start or conclusion of services.