

Ritual of the Week: Shalom Aleichem שלום עליכם

Shalom Aleichem is a mystical poem written by an unknown author on the 16th century. Traditionally recited at the Shabbat table before Kiddush (the blessing over wine that sanctifies Shabbat), there are several ways to understand the role of the “ministering angels”--the malachei hasharet--that this poem addresses. Rabbinic tradition teaches that each one of us is accompanied by angels. One view suggests that the angels have the capacity to wipe our slates clean and a second that the angels evaluate our preparation for Shabbat and determine what our next Shabbat will look like (see sources below).

Another interpretation connects Shalom Aleichem to Lecha Dodi, the poem we sing during Kabbalat Shabbat, welcoming the Shabbat bride. According to this interpretation, we greet the ministering angels who accompany Shabbat and brought her to our tables, welcoming them in peace and, once their duty has been fulfilled, sending them off with a blessing of peace.

Questions for Conversation:

- Who are the ministering angels in your life? How have they accompanied you to this moment, this Shabbat? How have you blessed them?
- Just as the angels evaluate how our home is prepared for Shabbat--consider who is responsible for making your Shabbat possible: who prepared the food? Where did the food come from? Who grew it? Who made an extra effort to put their work aside to help create this sacred moment?
- If our malachei hasharet--our ministering angels--have the power to bless our next Shabbat based on this Shabbat, what pieces of this Shabbat or this week do you hope will be repeated next week?
- How can you foster a greater sense of connection with the people in your life this week?

Shalom Aleichem

Peace to you, ministering angels, angels of the Most High, of the highest Sovereign, the Holy Blessed One.	Shalom aleichem, mal'achei hasharet, mal'achei elyon, mimelech malchei ham'lachim, hakadosh baruch hu.	שְׁלוֹם עֲלֵיכֶם מְלַאֲכֵי הַשָּׁרֵת מְלַאֲכֵי עֲלִיּוֹן מִמְּלֶכֶד מְלָכֵי הַמְּלָכִים הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא
Come in peace, angels of peace, angels of the Most High, of the highest Sovereign, the Holy Blessed One.	Bo'achem l'shalom, mal'achei hashalom, mal'achei elyon, mimelech malchei ham'lachim, hakadosh baruch hu.	בוֹאֲכֶם לְשָׁלוֹם מְלַאֲכֵי הַשָּׁלוֹם מְלַאֲכֵי עֲלִיּוֹן מִמְּלֶכֶד מְלָכֵי הַמְּלָכִים הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא
Bless me with peace, angels of peace, angels of the Most High, of the highest Sovereign, the Holy Blessed One.	Bar'chuni l'shalom, mal'achei hashalom, mal'achei elyon, mimelech malchei ham'lachim, hakadosh baruch hu.	בְּרַכּוּנִי לְשָׁלוֹם מְלַאֲכֵי הַשָּׁלוֹם מְלַאֲכֵי עֲלִיּוֹן מִמְּלֶכֶד מְלָכֵי הַמְּלָכִים הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא

<p>Go in peace, angels of peace, angels of the Most High, of the highest Sovereign, the Holy Blessed One.</p>	<p>Tzeit'chem l'shalom, mal'achei hashalom, mal'achei elyon, mimelech malchei ham'lachim, hakadosh baruch hu.</p>	<p>צאתכם לשלום מלאכי השלום מלאכי עליון ממלך מלכי המלכים הקדוש ברוך הוא</p>
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Possible sources and references that inspired Shalom Aleichem:

Deuteronomy 28:6

ברוך אתה בבואך וברוך אתה בצאתך:

Blessed shall you be in your comings and blessed shall you be in your goings.

Psalms 91:11

כי מלאכיו יצוה-לך לשמרה בכל-דרךך:

For God will order God's angels to guard you wherever you go.

Masechet Shabbat 119b:

אמר רב חסדא אמר מר עוקבא: כל המתפלל בערב שבת ואומר "וניכילוי", שני מלאכי השרת המלווין לו לאדם מניחין ידיהן על ראשו ואומרים לו "נסר עונך ונטאתך תכפר".

Rav Hisda said that Mar Ukva said: Anyone who prays on Shabbat evening and recites *vaykhullu*, the two ministering angels who accompany the person place their hands on the person's head and say: "And your iniquity has passed, and your sin has been atoned" (Isaiah 6:7).

תנא, רבי יוסי בר יהודה אומר: שני מלאכי השרת מלווין לו לאדם בערב שבת מבית הכנסת לביתו, אחד טוב ואחד רע. וכשפא לביתו ומצא נר דלוק ושלחן ערוך ומטתו מוצעת, מלאך טוב אומר: "יהי רצון שתהא לשבת אחרת כד", ומלאך רע עונה "אמן" בעל כרחו. ואם לאו, מלאך רע אומר: "יהי רצון שתהא לשבת אחרת כד", ומלאך טוב עונה "אמן" בעל כרחו.

It was taught in a *baraita*: Rabbi Yosei bar Yehuda says: Two ministering angels accompany a person on Shabbat evening from the synagogue home, one good angel and one evil angel. And when the person gets home and finds a lamp burning and a table set and the bed made, the good angel says: May it be Your will that it shall be like this for another Shabbat. And the evil angel answers against their will: Amen. And if the person's home is not prepared for Shabbat in that manner, the evil angel says: May it be Your will that it shall be so for another Shabbat, and the good angel answers against their will: Amen.