Hospitality, Hostility and the Issues of Interiority and Secrecy

Vu de chez soi : hospitalité, hostilité et questions d’intériorité et de secret

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Hospitality, Hostility and the Issues of Interiority and Secrecy

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Hospitium (Greek: ξενία, xenía, προξενία) is the ancient Greco-Roman concept of hospitality as a divine right of the guest and a divine duty of the host. Similar or broadly equivalent customs were and are also known in other cultures, though not always by that name. Among the Greeks and Romans, hospitium was of a twofold character: private and public. ("Hospitium", Wikipedia)

Hospitality derives from the Latin hospes, meaning “host”, “guest”, or “stranger”. Hospes is formed from hostis, which means “stranger” or “enemy” (the latter being where terms like “hostile” derive). By metonymy the Latin word “Hospital” means a guest-chamber, guest’s lodging, an inn. Hospes/hostis is thus the root for the English words host, hospitality, hospice, hostel and hotel. ("Hospitality", Wikipedia)

1 Hospitality is an act of meeting and mutual recognition which requires at least two people and a space for the meeting to take place. That place is called home, whether it refers to a built dwelling, a neighborhood, a city, a country or the earth. Hospitality is one of the highest moral virtues, and a part of our living humanistic worldview. Indeed, few ever confess that they are not hospitable. It carries such a powerful evocative force that it is generally assumed that a warm welcome is synonym for hospitality.

2 Yet, in our daily lives—and in the life of the country we live in—we also carefully ensure, that an elaborate set of time, spatial, and moral rules of hospitality are followed by both hosting and hosted hosts, before, during and even after the encounter. Such
rules, we feel, help secure our homes, thus inevitably recognizing there is a risk, if not a
danger, of confrontation or hostility between both hosts. The tension between, on the
one hand, the highest moral order and ethical risk-taking, and on the other hand, the
practical risk of a drift from the positive experience of hospitality and open hostility
between hosts, is, one hopes, implicitly resolved by the rules of hospitality which are
supposed to tame and limit open hostility, as well as confine hostility to a latent state,
while leaving room for at least temporary welcome. The home, where hospitality and
the prevention of its potential drift into hostility take place, is the main stake in the
encounter between hosts, as shown by the careful setting and enforcement of material
and symbolic markers of hospitality regulation and dynamics. Such markers and
movements taking place in near-home territories and inside the home constitute one of
the poles of the tension between hospitality as an “absolute” value, and hospitality in
action, generating a series of events geared towards the hoped-for resolution of that
tension. We will first focus our attention on the actions and events of this pole in order
to grasp their meanings, scope and repercussions on the dynamics of the hosting and
hosted host relationship.

Hospitality as a value originates from religious traditions, be they Greek and Roman,
embodied by the New Testament or the Hebrew Bible. Their prescriptive force remains
as the foundation of the view of hospitality still ongoing today in the Jewish tradition,
thus constituting the other pole of the tension between hospitality as a value, and
hospitality as modern practice. This pole of values will be addressed through the
ethical and practical lived experiences and approaches of the Hebrew Bible. It is
difficult to be hospitable. Punishments for breaches of the laws of hospitality amount to
acknowledging this obligation as a trial for both hosted and welcoming host. I have
developed the concept of hospitality as the great trial of and, indeed, the great
adventure of dwelling (Serfaty, 2016). Why is hospitality the great trial of dwelling?
What is at stake in the risk of hospitality drifting into hostility? I will address that
question by defining and further exploring the experience of dwelling and the issues of
the inhabitants’ interiority and secrecy. The conclusion of this chapter will take us back
to the Jewish tradition regarding the intimate links between home, hospitality and
journeying, through the exploration of the multiple emblematic meanings of one of the
letters of its alphabet, the letter B (bet) and of the mezuzah, the piece of parchment
enclosed in a case that is placed on the doorposts of Jewish homes.

1. The dynamics of hospitality regulation

The hosts are inside their home. They consider themselves sovereign in their domain.
At one point, guests—outsiders to the domestic sphere contained in the home—are
requesting to be let inside their home, interrupting the mental and spatial focus of the
hosts on themselves, as well as the flow of their personal time. From the apparently
benign but powerfully symbolic force of the fence delineating the end of the public
domain from the beginning of the potential hosting hosts’ private sphere, and the
dramatic, sometimes ceremonial walk and almost theatrical approach to the house, the
guests walk to the complex place that is the threshold. This is the place where the first
threat of intrusion can occur, but also the place where the hosting hosts’ sovereignty
might be questioned. Indeed, it is already shaking on its foundation. Alertness and
eager screening of the guests happen there in a silent confrontation which will be
resolved only by the decisive steps taken by the hosting hosts to welcome or not visitors. Indeed, the hosting hosts must answer immediately the inner question of allowing—or not—the guests “to be” within their house, to let them in and the encounter between both sides to “take place” into it.

5 Because the guests are defined by their position of exteriority to the home, the nature of the threshold is the place where the latent hostility contained in hospitality is evaluated, hopefully tamed and resolved into a tentative welcome. More to the point, it is, to the eyes of the hosting hosts, transgressive, as the hosting host is fully aware that the compliance with the contract, he implicitly enters into with his guest lies in the mutual acquiescence of the terms of that contract. The contract is an engagement for mutual restraint and respect where the hosting host remains a sovereign in his home, dictating the use of its territories and time-related practices. It engages the guest to graciously accept to be served by the host without usurping the latter’s place as sovereign nor becoming a parasite.

6 The vestibule, where the hosting hosts re-enter into their own home signaling the welcome, conversation follows greetings, gifts are offered and received, coats, boots, scarves, etc. are taken off. It then becomes the place of the first appeasement between hosts and guest (Serfaty-Garzon, 2016). In all those places, from near-home territories to the vestibule, the dance between the desire to act hospitably and the potential reversal of the latter into hostility is on the mind of everyone involved. It is a dance made more elaborate by the number and nature of several material elements that highlight the complexity of the issue at hand. A traditional doorknocker, for example, upholds the suspense of who is coming from the outside world until the moment when the host opens the door. The more suspicious doorbell with camera enacts hospitality from a place of distrust. The careful screening of guests through the door intercom system is equivalent to stronger frontiers and limits between the outside world and the private home sphere. In some residential buildings, a finely furnished and spacious entrance hall adds more complex and subtle statements about welcoming guests. It at once impresses social status on the entering visitors, while stopping their gaze from preying beyond the aesthetics of the controlled façade offered to the outside world (Serfaty, 1978).

7 However, the dynamics of hospitality start just beyond the fence—and sometimes the porch—at the door, which plays a very significant part, of which we are well aware at multiple times within a single day. This Janus figure opens up to two antagonistic worlds, separating, while at once bridging the domestic and spatially and temporally self-centered spheres from the shared public domain where one has to make room for others, and where sociability, as a suspension of the potential hostilities between people takes place (Serfaty, 2016). The shape of the door, its size, materials and symbolism comes together in an infinite play on sternness, ambiguous transparency, austere closure or casual protection of the home. The door is anything but passivity (Serfaty, 2016). It addresses the issue of strangeness and foreignness of potential visitors, heightening the welcoming hosts’ confrontation with alterity (Serfaty, 1989), the strength of their identity and, most of all, their capacity to dwell safely within themselves (Serfaty, 2021).

8 Dwelling limits are guarded, be they home limits or a country’s territorial entries. The elaborate time, space, and moral rules attached to the contract between hosts and guests define the conditional hospitality that is part of daily life and of a specific
country. The securing of homes is constant in order to keep the outside world out. Holding up authority over who may enter the home as a hosted host and denying to the guests, as both prisoners and potential masters, the power to lord over the hosting parties or place them at their mercy is a key issue in that respect. Maintaining a form of sovereignty in one's homes is done by exercising filtering, and a certain degree of violence.

9 But the aim is to remain hospitable, transcending fears into sincere welcomes. While fear generally prevails, hospitality still remains a beautiful and ethical part of our lives. Just like people do, countries waver between openness and stringency in their welcome. Just like individuals, they are troubled and uncertain, as witnessed by their changing hospitality policies throughout history. The incapacity for the parties involved to resolve in a fully satisfactory manner the tensions between the ethical nature of hospitality and its translation into daily concrete acts and dynamics leads us to the powerfully prescriptive force of hospitality in religious systems, in particular to the enduring prescriptions regarding hospitality in the foundational texts and bodies of thought of the Hebrew Bible.

2. Hospitality in the Jewish tradition

10 In the Hebrew Bible the great emphasis on and vision of hospitality appears through the numerous references to the ethics, laws, and practices of hospitality that are made throughout its books. A wealth of references to hospitality is also made in the narrative portions of the Bible. All are enriched by an abundance of elaborate and minutely detailed commentaries and rulings which point to the centrality of the issue of hospitality in the Jewish tradition.

11 Rabbinic literature widened the scope of the virtue of hospitality, with the commandment of hachnasat orchim. The phrase literally means “the bringing in of guests”, where “hachnassat” refers to the double movement of hosts welcoming guests (orchim, plural of ore’akh, a guest), implicitly from their door or the threshold of their private territory, into their home, and the guests’ stepping across the doorstep of that home, underlining from the outset that what is at stake in the day-to-day practice of hospitality is the home, and the dweller’s interiority.

12 Rabbinic literature provides clear definitions of the duties of hosts and guests (Encyclopaedia Judaica, “hospitality”, 2007) in order to remind both parties of the stakes of hospitality, and avoid situations where it could drift into hostility, denouncing at the same time the risks for a welcoming host of offending his guest, as well as the tactless or parasitical guest. Biblical thought and the Jewish people’s experience of exile throughout history have generated a form of exilic thinking, as well as a system of laws and prescriptions of conduct in their host countries, which are an integral part of the Jewish tradition. One guiding principle for the Jewish population’s civil conduct in the welcoming land is that “the law of the land is the law” (Aramaic: dina de-malkhuta dina), which prescribes that the Jewish population adheres to the law of the country (Gray Matter IV, Beit Din, Dina d’Malchuta Dina). In another reflection on the ethics of hospitality’s embodiment in the Jewish people’s exilic history, it is customary, since the Hebrews’ Babylonian exile in 585 BCE to pray for the peace and prosperity of the country where they live (Sefarim, Prophets, Jeremiah: 29.7).
The Hebrew Bible's vision of hospitality is to be considered within the theological framework of the relationship between God and humanity as a host-guest relationship, as well as the philosophical and ethical thoughts deriving from such a framework.

In the first of the Mosaic books, “the man”, Adam, is “taken” by God to be “put” in the garden of Eden to till it and take care of the place (dress it) while ensuring not to destroy it (to keep it). Thus, God’s hospitality starts with the elective choice of a place that has been planted by God with trees to “put” Adam formed “of the dust of the ground” and “given the breath of life”. Man, from the outset, is not a “native” or an autochthon. He is in “existential exile”, in a place which is, as the narrative will show, “not the place of his accomplishment” (Trigano, 2012). God’s hospitality comes right away with multiple responsibilities assigned to man, who is expected to explore the world and till the land to fulfill his needs, as well as to learn to share the original riches and their fruits, all in a spirit of care of the fruitful and life-sustaining natural world (Haddad, 2007).

Adding to the moral nature of the guests’ duties of work, sharing the world’s riches, and caring for the earth, there is God’s prohibition not to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis, 2: 16–17). Such a prohibition is inseparable from man’s status as guest in the garden of Eden, as well as of the free enjoyment of “every tree of the garden”. Indeed, it limits unbridled enjoyment of the riches of the world and thus civilizes it (Haddad, 2017a, 2017b). Significantly, “eating” implies taking something in. It is an act that suppresses what is being eaten, canceling out all limits between the eater and the eaten. As in the common sentences which use the verb “to eat” to describe metaphorically a consuming relationship between two persons, what should not be eaten completely in this biblical verse is knowledge of and about the other, that part of knowledge which does not belong to us, but to the other man or woman (Ouaknin, 2008a). That very part of unknown knowledge constitutes the distance needed to allow the others room to exist as different persons and in their own spaces. It lets the others define themselves according to their own mode of expression and choose the extent to which they reveal themselves to the outside world. The tree of knowledge creates the distance which allows others to speak for themselves (Ouaknin, 2008b). That distance, the limits it establishes, the unknown, or, to use a psychological vocabulary, the person’s secret (Serfaty, 2003a), embodied by the tree, are indispensable for communal life, while keeping open the possibility of knowledge between subjects, each according to their own free expression.

The guest’s privileges, as well as the moral limits put on any unbridled enjoyment of hospitality find their foundation on the succinct, explicit and direct general ethical principle that men and women are only “strangers and settlers” on earth, to the point of not being allowed permanent ownership of land (Leviticus, 25: 23).

3. Abraham

The narrative portions of the Hebrew Bible provide another of the foundations of hospitality through a number of figures, such as Abraham, the father of monotheism, who remains a guiding reference in the three monotheistic traditions. In the Jewish tradition, traditional commentators see the hospitality offered by Abraham as perfect hospitality. Indeed, Abraham embodies unconditional hospitality.
The emblematic force of Abraham’s hospitality is first sketched by his tent’s location at the crossroads, as well as by their openings onto the four cardinal points, in order to welcome any travelers arriving from any direction without effort on their parts. He embodies the particularly spontaneous hospitality offered to a person, the ore’akh, because that person is journeying, on the way (orah), or passing by one’s home, regardless of that person’s identity. In one of the most famous biblical scenes, God appears to Abraham (Genesis, 18: 1–4) when he meets with three strangers, first referred to as men and later as angels: “Faced with a choice between listening to God and offering hospitality to what seemed to be human beings, Abraham chose the latter. God granted him his request and waited while Abraham brought the visitors food and drink” (Sacks, 2008). The interpretation of the text, where Abraham seems to place the value of the relationship with the other above the notion of verticality, that is to say that of the divine, has become the basis for a principle in Judaism: “Greater is hospitality than receiving the Divine Presence,” (William Davidson Talmud: bShab 127a; bShev 36a) since the other is made in the image of God (Genesis, 1: 27). In the Jewish tradition, just as Abraham saw the trace of the divine in the face of the stranger, “serving God and offering hospitality to strangers (are) not two things but one” (Sacks, 2008). The radical and creative nature of Abraham’s hospitality is revealed in his lack of fear when faced with strangers, his discretion as to their origins, affiliations or reasons for their travels, and his eagerness to bring material and spiritual comfort to them. He reveals his own weakness (“as ye are come to your servant”) in order to soften that of the strangers (Herzog, 2012: 14) and welcomes them into his tent, offering himself to their gaze (Herzog, 2012: 12). He keeps them company and gives them explicit assurance that they will “pass on” (Genesis, 18: 6–8). Thus Abraham, contrary to the common practice in the neighboring city of Sodom, at once excludes hostility towards his guests, any risk of hostage taking, and lets them free (Herzog, 2012: 14).

Abraham chooses to define the host-guest relationship as a situation where the only thing which is at stake is his own status as a welcoming host and not the guests’ (Herzog, 2012: 14). The flimsy materials of the temporary shelter (sukkah) built for the Jewish Festival of Sukkot (Encyclopedià Judaica, “Sukkah”: 297), or Festival of Booths, symbolizes—among other symbols—Abraham’s tent and his acceptance to place himself in a situation of vulnerability in order to welcome the other. Sukkot is also the Festival of guests. It reminds every host that he is never the full owner of the home he inhabits, and that the awareness of this very vulnerability, the experience of parting with some of his property for the benefit of others, of loss of place and uprooting, allows him to be authentically welcoming towards the other. Abraham’s hospitality also requires accompanying one’s guests before parting with them (Genesis: 18,16), firmly establishing the ancient imperative still valid today that is to say escorting one’s guests to the door and wishing them a safe journey (The William Davidson Talmud, Sotah 46b). It is generally considered today that escorting a guest is at once a courtesy, indicates concern for his or her well-being, solong as he is guest, defines the moment when he ceases to be one, precisely setting the time when we, as welcoming host, are released from our responsibility towards him or her (Pitt-Rivers, 1977).

Is there a limit to Abraham’s hospitality? “Abraham is the one who bequeaths the tradition of duty towards others. He is the one who establishes obligations with regard to the body of others: duty to feed and shelter, a frightening duty, without limit, because what is human (l’humain) is above human strength” (Levinas, 1977: 18). But
while his hospitality is unconditional, when asked where Sarah his wife is, his brief answer is “in the tent”\(^\text{18}\) (Genesis, 18: 9). This only example in the text of a limit to Abraham’s choice to be enthusiastically hospitable refers to the most intimate part of his home as embodied by Sarah’s quarters. Abraham’s answer establishes that he is willing to take all the personal risks connected with welcoming the unknown, but not those that are connected to his intimate life. His wife is an active partner in the welcome he extends to the travelers. But he establishes the only limit to the guests’ privileges, one which protects Sarah, as well as the inner part of his home, which she represents. The guests are not allowed to gain access to their host’s intimacy, underlining again, as we shall see more at length in this chapter, the direct link between home, hospitality and interiority.

21 Jewish tradition further approaches hospitality toward the unknown as represented by the stranger (\textit{guer}) repeatedly throughout the Mosaic books. Indeed, there is an “almost endlessly iterated concern for the stranger”\(^\text{20}\) (Sacks, 2019), with independent references as to the need not to ill-treat them in 36 places according to some commentators, in 46 places according to others\(^\text{21}\) (The William Davidson Talmud, \textit{Bava Metzia}: 59b). One dimension of the repeated emphasis in biblical law warning against the wrongdoing of a stranger is the spirit of social justice (Sacks, 2019). This social legislation also prescribes that he or she must be included in the welfare provisions of the Israelite and Jewish society. Another dimension of the biblical laws with regard to strangers, such as “one law shall be to him that is homeborn, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you”\(^\text{22}\) (Exodus, 12: 49) refers to the Hebrew society as a political body, its constitutional and public law, which outlines the “one law and one statute” principle, civil equality, rights and their limitations, as well as duties (Wygoda, 2012; \textit{Encyclopaedia Judaica}, 2007), “Strangers and Gentiles”) of citizenship and minority rights that, significantly, are not based on autochthony (Trigano, 2012).

22 The Hebrew Bible also repeatedly sees the stranger from the perspective of the Hebrews’ own embodied, long, historic experience of physical and moral suffering in a foreign land\(^\text{23}\) (Exodus, 12: 40). Those references are almost always linked to the historical reminder in the form of a command: “And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt”\(^\text{24}\) (Deuteronomy, 15: 16). Such is their importance that many of them are also incorporated into daily and holiday prayers, and that the holiday of Passover (\textit{Encyclopedia Britannica}, “Passover”) commemorates each year this period of oppression with its story retold in a special reading at the family table.

23 The command not to ill-treat the stranger has psychological and emotive implications as it reminds Jewish people of the relative powerlessness and insecurities of the stranger, because, most of all, it literally knows the soul of the stranger\(^\text{25}\). As such, it becomes a command of humility in the face of strangers\(^\text{26}\) (\textit{Sefaria}, Exodus, 22: 20) and has a political dimension. The prescription to love the stranger appears repeatedly in the Hebrew Bible (Sacks, 2019) whereas the capital command “thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” appears only once\(^\text{27}\) (Leviticus, 19: 18) but very close to the command of loving the stranger\(^\text{28}\) (Leviticus, 19: 34). Indeed, the injunction not to ill-treat the stranger is not separated from the ones prescribing to love him\(^\text{29}\) (Leviticus, 19: 34)\(^\text{30}\).

24 Commentators argue that something fundamental is at stake in the Hebrew Bible’s ethical teachings regarding the stranger and his or her vision of a just social order prescribing so frequently, sometimes in one breath, the command to care about his
welfare, the care for the fatherless and the widow, along with the reminder “thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt” (Sacks, 2008).

“It is terrifying in retrospect to grasp how seriously the Torah took the phenomenon of xenophobia [...]. It is as if the Torah were saying with the utmost clarity: reason is insufficient. Sympathy is inadequate. Only the force of history and memory is strong enough to form a counterweight to hate [...] Why should I not hate the stranger? Because the stranger is me” (Levinas, 1971: 234, 237).

To further grasp what is fundamentally at stake in the Hebrew Bible’s ethical teachings regarding the stranger, one must underline the fact that the term “stranger” or “guer” is used in different contexts to designate either man and humanity, or a person who is not “homeborn”. Indeed, the antiquated translation of the structural biblical precept “One law shall be to him that is homeborn, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you” (Exodus, 12: 49) was: “the sojourner that sojourneth among you” (Sheleff, 1999: 6–8), thus bringing back to light the fact that the noun “stranger”, and the verb lagour meaning “to inhabit” and “to live”, stem from the same Hebrew root, “guer”.

This at once takes us to the foundational theological idea that man is a “stranger and a sojourner” on earth (Chronicles 1, 29: 15), as well as to the deeply embedded philosophical thought of inaugural and existential exile, as well as to the exilic thought stemming from the continued experience of strangeness in the Jewish people’s collective memory. Adam himself experienced existential exile. Abraham embodies the inaugural exile, as he was commanded to leave his land, home and father’s house. He saw himself durably as stranger and a sojourner, as did Kind David. Moses had to suffer personal exile before assuming leadership of the people. The Jewish people continue to this day, during the festival of Passover, to follow the precept to teach their children that they were “guérim” (the plural of “guer”) in Egypt so that each new generation feels it is being liberated from slavery in their own time. The fact that the guer is at the same time the inhabitant and a stranger also points to the idea that inhabiting—one’s home as building, one’s neighborhood, country or the earth—is not becoming one with a place or the land. In that perspective, one of the other words meaning stranger, nokhri, represents the person who believes to be rooted somewhere, that home is the place of one’s full autochthon, who believes, like the other category of stranger, the “zar”, that he or she lives in a sort of fusion with the land (Trigano, 2012). The illusion that man can situate himself in an intimate and fusional relationship with the earth (adama) makes him a stranger to himself. The guer-inhabitant separates himself, the way Adam did, from his telluric place, in order to live within an incomplete world, where, according to a cardinal idea of Judaism, he is expected to act in order to continue building it, far from the illusion that the world is a perfect achievement.

Other Hebrew expressions meaning “to welcome someone into one’s home” strikingly mention that the “faces” or panim—a word that is always plural—of the guest or of the unknown are indeed what is welcomed into one’s dwelling. Lekabèl pené michéou literally means welcoming, inviting (lekabèl) the faces (pené) of someone (michéou) which can be a known or unknown person. The other Hebrew welcoming expression, Lekabèl ètt pené haorkhim, welcoming (lekabèl) the faces (pené) of guests (haorkhim, plural of ore’ak, guest) contains the same explicit reference to the faces of the guest.

The use of the plural of the word “face” refers to the many emotions it expresses, the fact that a face can make invisible those emotions or thoughts, as well as the troubling
experience everyone shares of not really knowing one’s face, of which we can only see a reversed image in the mirror. Another sense of the root of (panim) is that of pnim or penim which means “the interior” of beings or things. Thus, the face (panim) expresses “exteriority”, what is offered at a given moment by one person to the gaze of the other. At the same time, it teaches that the face does not reveal the intimate world that each person carries in secret within him or her (Ouaknin, 2008c). From this perspective, and although the expressiveness of the face already makes it belong to the order of language, interiority requires the exchange of actual words between people that would reach out in order to be revealed or shared. Through the face as simultaneous exteriority and “living presence” (Levinas, 1971: 61). The “otherness” of the other manifests itself in the face-to-face encounter. It imposes the irreducibility of alterity. And because humaneness is conceived as entangled in the other’s face, responsibility for the other is the response to its injunction and interpellation (Levinas, 1971: 61).

This approach to the welcoming of the face of the guest develops and broadens the meanings of the narration of Abraham’s hospitality as it emphasizes that access to the other’s face and hospitality are one, as well as being immediately ethical, it implies more generally that an essential dimension of ethics is founded on the recognition of the impossible appropriation of the other (Ouaknin, 2005). It further underlines that hospitality corresponds to a moment of fracture in the subject’s autonomy grounded on an interruption of the self. At the same time, as the Hebrew language conveys, hospitality is also an interruption of one’s time and implies making time to welcome the other. The verb “to invite” in Hebrew is Lehazmine, which means to invite in order to give time (zeman) to the welcoming host to prepare for the pleasure of the guests’ arrival, as well as to give the hosted hosts the time to prepare themselves in order to enjoy being welcomed with care and looking forward to responding graciously to the attention extended to them. The verb Lehazmine (to prepare, to invite, to appoint, to summon—The Marcus Jastrow dictionary, 1903), opens a phenomenology of time which includes expectation, attention, and care. It allows one of its possible translations as “to make time”, and further points to the fact that the words mezouman, meaning “ready” (after a preparation for a certain purpose) and mezoumani, meaning “my guest”, both refer to time in their common Hebrew root ZMN, zeman (Ouaknin, 2017).

Abraham embodies unconditional hospitality and the choice to transcend oneself in order to face the infinite, that is to say not only God, but what humanity and every face of every person represents. The ethical approach to hospitality in everyone’s life requests that hosting and hosted hosts assume a double movement or self-expropriation or interruptions of their own self-centeredness because they, indeed, are both strangers. They both must allow room for the other, let him or her be in their respective homes, step inside each other’s dwellings in order for each one to “take place” and be able to express oneself at their own time. This logic of gift and counter-gift in hospitality is founded on a contract implying forms of renunciations and reciprocity, and, as the Hebrew language reminds us, the intentional and benevolent interruption of the flow of one’s personal time.

In all those instances, hosting and hosted hosts have to choose to welcome the other and transcend their fear to be overlorded in their own private sphere. The necessity to transcend oneself and fear for one’s inner domain make hospitality a perilous endeavor, regardless of its rewards. Why is that?
4. Dwelling, interiority and separation

Home is grasped and experienced from the perspective of a double awareness: one’s awareness to be anchored in one’s interiority, as well as one’s spatial inherence. Drawing on Levinas (1971), interiority is presence to oneself, separateness, and the subject’s intimate, inner “at home” place. To assume themselves as such, the subjects must be separated from the other, and receive their existence from this separation. According to Levinas, a being who refers to himself, who holds himself to himself, who fulfills himself in solitude as enjoyment or happiness, implanted in his body, withdrawn in his house, receives his existence from separation. He is radically self-sufficient. But self-consciousness, accomplished positively, does not imply the negation of the being from which it separates. It does not prevent the reception of the face nor the hospitality. The separated being is identified with the Same, but is not defined in relation to a whole. Protected in the secrecy of their inner dwelling, subjects thus necessarily transcend themselves in order to welcome the other. It is from inhabiting one’s own inner spheres that one is able to remain in the world, that one can go outside, experience one’s spatial anchoring, bring oneself into action in the world, situate oneself in that world, establish places, build a house to access the experience of being at home in the world, as well as experience hospitality. Inhabiting physical space is grounded in the interior abode.

This inner dwelling is a place where movements for the establishment and renewal of borders, the protection of sovereignty and autonomy are constant. It is permanently active in order to avoid the pitfall of withdrawing into itself, self-confinement and drifting towards self-alienation. Withdrawing into oneself alienates one’s capacity to welcome the other. In its effort to transcend itself and open itself to the other, however, the inner dwelling must escape the risks of being overwhelmed by the assignments imposed by the other, of being expelled from itself and handed over to the other without recourse. It is at this pivotal moment, when the hosting host experiences this effort to get beyond and above his own centeredness to welcome a guest, that he or she is most vulnerable to the blurring of boundaries between his or her self and the self of the guest. Separation, which guarantees the strength of the subject’s intimate identity, becomes unstable. The guest represents the potential disappearance of that intimate identity and the inner dwelling territory. Perceived implicit hostility in hospitality is one major source for the intimate experience of dwelling dynamism, or, to use an expression generally attached to spiritual life and poetic expression, the movements of the soul. It outlines vacillations as much as re-grasping and re-establishment of the subject’s inner sovereignty in the secrecy of his or her interiority, calling for an exploration of secrecy in relation to hospitality and hostility.

Intimacy is hidden to protect itself and to protect the identity of the inhabitants. It is hidden because it is of the order of depth and not of superficiality. It opens up, of course, but it does not give way to chance. It chooses its counterpart because it carries within itself an intelligence of the hidden, not as any other good, but as something precious to be retained against any external force, but as a good carrying meaning.

What is separate is secret, even if any separation does not constitute a secret. The peculiarity of separation, in secrecy, is first of all to establish a difference with what is manifest, which is fully exposed to the gaze, and shown as being spontaneously
expressive and communicative. Secondly, it is to give to see this appearance as something which covers the secret, and which does not relate to its being. Thirdly, its separating role makes it a support for identity. It presents the example of an intimate freedom, that of the subject who is the sole master of his revelation. In the house, cupboards, chests, drawers, basements, and attics support the work of secrecy (Serfaty, 1984).

The home is the place of interlocking secrets. Hidden places, which inevitably exist in any inhabited house, help to locate the boundaries of the ego, to clarify the fact of being a distinct subject, with secret thoughts and feelings. The home's hidden places evoke the internal self, inasmuch as, “one knows that there are a certain number of fundamental truths about oneself to which one has greater access than anyone else” (Boutang, 2016; Dufourmantelle, 2015; Margolis, 1976: 136; Serfaty, 2003a).

Intimacy and identity hide behind an appearance which half-opens the secret. In the house, for a hosting host, the secret cannot be revealed suddenly. It is told by touches at the points of contact between appearance and partial, progressive, constant evaluation of the worth and safety of self-disclosure. For every secret is knowledge and nothing but knowledge. This special place, separated from the rest of knowledge, results from a sorting operation:

The noun secret comes from the Latin secretum, the adjective comes from secretus, past participle of the verb secerno which means to separate, to set aside. But the verb se-cerno is itself composed of the verb cerno and the prefix se indicating separation, the setting aside [...] cerno means to sift [...] Excerno [...] to evacuate by sifting, [...] secerno, which means to separate, gave two French terms: secretion and secret (Lévy, 1976).

The risk embodied by the guest is, for the hosting host, the unwanted revelation, the violence of the unraveling of his secret. The guest however faces that same risk as he must assume, at the same time as his host, an effort, a similar transcendence in order for both to share time, acknowledge the face of the other and recognize the autonomy of his interior abode. Under these conditions of shared efforts towards self-limitation, creative distance and making room for the other, hospitality indeed takes place.

5. ב The letter bet (b): Shelter, interiority and hospitality

Material and symbolic barriers as well as moral rules at once regulate the dynamics of hospitality and facilitate them, as it is the hosting hosts’ sense that they remain sovereign of their domain that allows them to transcend themselves. They embody that distance and room are granted to both hosts. They state that dwelling and home are not realized without the awareness of the necessity and acts of hospitality.

This is precisely one of the core ideas stemming from the study of the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet, the letter bet (b) ב “. Used twice in succession to open the first verse of the story of the very beginning of the the world (Genesis, 1: 1), its name means “dwelling”, “house”, or “home” (The Marcus Jastrow Dictionary, 1903). The reading method “lecture aux éclats” (Ouaknin, 2016a), which looks for multiple sparks of meaning without ever fixing them dogmatically and sets “the caress” (Levinas, 1971) as a form of interpretation, sees the letter bet as “une lettre-maison” (Ouaknin, 2016b), a letter-house. It allows the reading of the first word of Genesis, Berechit (In the beginning) as “Rosh bayit” решוша byit or “In the beginning was the house”, establishing the Earth
as man’s abode, and the place that is a house as a shelter. The numerical value of bet is 2, representing the first manifestation of the multiple as well as “the interior, the intimate, sharing the same space, being inside the same story, being able to start a common story over again on other bases, learning about history, time and space”48. The lines of the letter bet take this idea further as they provide the image of a house which is closed on three sides, but open on its fourth side, establishing the house as bet’s original design and its intentionality. It emphasizes the way a house should be: an interior and the place for intimacy, but with an opening to the outside world. In order to be experienced as home, the house must embody the dialectics of interiority and openness to the other through hospitality, as well as the dialectics of the fixed and the mobile.

41 The latter concept is further unveiled by the “lecture aux éclats” which reads the same first word of Genesis, Berechit (“In the beginning”), as Ashar bayit, which associates the verb to walk49 and the house. A living house does not remain immobile, centered on its interiority and devoted only to the intimate without risking its alteration and alienation. It is not constantly opened to the outside, agitated by relentless comings and goings. But it takes on its meaning when hospitality from the inside offers its riches to the outside, where moving and walking happen, and nourish what is tempted by stillness, the intimate (Serfaty, 1994).

50 The beginning is based on the fruitful tension which exists between the dwelling and the path, two poles of an essential dialectic of the life of each one, which is underlined by the text in the famous verse which is repeated twice a day in the liturgy of Shema Israel51 “when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way”52 (Deuteronomy, 6: 7).

6. The mezuzah: Inhabiting and journeying

42 The Deuteronomy commandment53 (Deuteronomy, 6: 7) requires placing these verses, written on a piece of parchment placed in a case, on the doorposts of Jewish homes, first marking the entrance, then extending inside the dwelling to all the doors of the habitable rooms54. Thus, by virtue of a small object, one is reminded that dwelling is founded on the choice to live according to a given set of moral and ethical rules (Serfaty, 2003b: 213–214). A tradition sees observant inhabitants touching the mezuzah with their fingertips and then kissing them when stepping into their home, in a kind of tender gesture toward the dwelling, a caress that signals the inhabitants’ awareness of their crossing a threshold and moving from the mode of exteriority into that of interiority. That same small object is placed on each inside door, effecting a kind of infinite interlocking of the spaces of the home, as if the limit between the outside world and the intimate sphere could never be definitely drawn and enforced.

43 The mezuzah allows the house to stay in motion, getting it into a dialectic of motion and immobility. The word indeed comes from the verb lazuz, which means to leave, to move, while zuz is the imperative for “move”, or get moving”: “The parchment speaks of movement, to fix the movement in the house without stopping it”55 (Ouaknin, 2016b). Inhabiting the house, beyond its expression of physical stability, must remain mobile to avoid the risk of the inhabitants being frozen themselves. Ultimately, making sure that the house is still moving means creating a dwelling that does not only enclose but also welcomes encounters.
The close proximity in Jewish tradition between home and journeying along paths, emphasizing the journey outside the home, movement, nomadism and sometimes wandering, as rich experiences that may be unique to humans, asserts that, from the inner dwelling to the question of home in the world, hospitality is the indispensable link.

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NOTES

1. The Hebrew Bible comprises three sections, i.e., Torah, Prophets and Writings. Also called the Tanakh—an acronym derived from דָּבָר / Torah (Teaching), נְבֵיהָ / Nevi’im (Prophets), and כְּתֻבִּים / Ketuvim (Writings)—it was written in Biblical Hebrew, with some sections written in Biblical Aramaic. According to the Jewish tradition the Tanakh is comprised of 24 books written by different authors over a period of around 850 years. The Hebrew Bible is also referred to as the Mikra (“reading”, or “that which is read”) to this day, alongside Tanakh.

2. The word or’axh means the guest who is journeying, as orah means the path. Abraham embodies hospitality as an ethical disposition towards whoever is “on the way” regardless of their identity. See the part devoted to Abraham’s hospitality in this chapter.

3. Mankind, created on the sixth day of the Creation: “Then the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”, Torah, Genesis, ch. 2, v. 7 (Berechit - בראשית), < https://www.sefarim.fr/Pentateuque_Gen%E8se_2_7.aspx>.
4. “And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.”, Torah, Genesis, ch. 2, v. 15 (Berechit - תֵּיבָרָא), <https://www.sefarim.fr/Pentateuque_Gen%E8se_1_28.aspx>.

5. “And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”, Torah, Genesis, ch. 2, v. 9 (Berechit - תֵּיבָרָא), <https://www.sefarim.fr/Pentateuque_Gen%E8se_2_9.aspx>.


7. “And the Lord God commanded the man, saying: ‘Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die’.”, Torah, Genesis, ch. 2, v. 16–17 (Berechit - תֵּיבָרָא), <https://www.sefarim.fr/Pentateuque_Gen%E8se_2_16.aspx>.

8. “It is not appropriate to benefit from the world, without providing a positive addition and something good for its continuation and preservation” in Torah Témima (my translation).

9. “Eating implies ‘I know the other’, I can annihilate the other. It has to do with murder”. My translation of notes taken during Marc-Alain Ouaknin’s lecture (Ouaknin, 2008b).

10. E.g., the striking metaphoric sentences such as “he will eat me alive” or “he devoured me whole”.

11. “And the land shall not be sold in perpetuity; for the land is Mine; for ye are strangers and settlers with Me.”, Torah Leviticus, ch. 25, v. 23 (Behar - בֹּרֶה), <https://www.sefarim.fr/Pentateuque_L%E9vitique_25_23.aspx>. Note the translation in French of this same verse by the rabbinate: “Nulle terre ne sera aliénée irrévocablement, car la terre est à moi, car vous n’êtes que des étrangers domiciliés chez moi” (my emphasis). The translation introduces the idea that humanity benefits only from a “domicile”, i.e. the equivalent of a city address, merely a place to stay, and not from a home they could think of as permanently and entirely their own.


13. “And the Lord appeared unto him by the terebinths of Mamre, as he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; and he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood over against him; and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed down to the earth, and said: ‘My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant. Let now a little water be fetched, and wash your feet, and recline yourselves under the tree’.”, Torah, Genesis, ch. 18, v. 1–4, (Vayera - וַיָּפֵר), <https://www.sefarim.fr/Pentateuque_Gen%E8se_18_4.aspx>.

14. “And God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them.”, Pentateuque, Genesis, ch. 1, v. 27 (Berechit - תֵּיבָרָא), <https://www.sefarim.fr/Pentateuque_Gen%E8se_1_27.aspx>.

15. On the issue of opening one’s home to a visitor’s gaze, see chapters on secrecy and the issue of interiority (Serfaty-Garzon, 2003a).

16. “And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and stay ye your heart; after that ye shall pass on; forasmuch as ye are come to your servant. And they said: ‘So do, as thou hast said’.”, Pentateuque, Genesis, ch. 18, v. 6–8 (Vayera - וַיָּפֵר), <https://www.sefarim.fr/Pentateuque_Gen%E8se_18_6.aspx>.

17. “And the men rose up from thence, and looked out toward Sodom; and Abraham went with them to bring them on the way.”, Torah, Genesis, ch. 18, v. 16 (Vayera - וַיָּפֵר), <https://www.sefarim.fr/Pentateuque_Gen%E8se_18_16.aspx>.


19. The term guer itself is generally translated as “stranger”. There are other words—and therefore different conceptualizations, for stranger, e.g., zar, nochri, réa and amit. The oral
tradition also identified two forms of the guer: the guer tzedek and the guer toshav. For an understanding of these terms, a diachronic study of the diversity of approaches present in the texts of the Jewish tradition, the legal category each term designates, and the identity logics that shape the relationship to the stranger over the centuries (Benadmon, 2012; Trigano, 2012).

20. Mishpatim (5779).


23. "Now the time that the children of Israel dwelt in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years.", Torah, Exodus, ch. 12, v. 40 (Bo - Ñ), <https://www.sefarim.fr/Pentateuque_Exode_12_40.aspx>.


25. "And a stranger shalt thou not oppress; for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.", note that "the heart of the stranger" means literally here: you know the soul of a stranger, Torah, Exodus, ch. 23, v. 9 (Michpatim - נביא), <https://www.sefarim.fr/Pentateuque_Exode_23_9.aspx>.


29. "Thou shalt not pervert the justice due to the stranger, or to the fatherless; nor take the widow’s raiment to pledge. But thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee thence; therefore I command thee to do this thing. When thou reapest thy harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go back to fetch it; it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow; that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thy hands. When thou beatest thine olive-tree, thou shalt not go over the boughs again; it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow. When thou gatherest the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shalt not glean it after thee; it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow. And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt; therefore I command thee to do this thing.", Pentateuque, Deutéronome, ch. 24, v. 17–22 (Ki tette - כָּלֵנָה), <https://www.sefarim.fr/Pentateuque_Deutéronome_24_16.aspx>.

30. "The stranger that sojourneth with you shall be unto you as the home-born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.", Torah, Leviticus, ch. 19, v. 34 (Kedochim - נביא), <https://www.sefarim.fr/Pentateuque_L%E9vitique_19_34.aspx>.

31. Mishpatim (5768): "Enlightenment thought is marked by two great attempts to ground ethics in something other than tradition. One belonged to the Scottish enlightenment—David Hume and
Adam Smith—who sought it in emotion: the natural sympathy of human beings for one another. The other was constructed by Immanuel Kant on the basis of reason. It was illogical to prescribe one ethical rule for some people and another for others. Reason is universal, argued Kant; therefore an ethic of reason would provide for universal respect (“Treat each person as an end in himself”). Neither succeeded. [...] Neither Kantian reason nor Humean emotion were strong enough to inoculate Europe against genocide”. (Sacks, 2008).


34. “For we are strangers before Thee, and sojourners, as all our fathers were: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is no abiding.”, Hagiographers, Chronicles 1, ch. 29, v. 15, <https://www.sefarim.fr/Hagiographes_Choeniques%2010115.aspx>.

35. “I am a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a burying-place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight.”, The Jewish Bible, Genesis, ch. 23, v. 4 (Haye Sarah - הַעֵין הַנָּר), <https://www.sefarim.fr/Pentateuque_Gen%E8se_23_4.aspx>.

36. “Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear unto my cry; keep not silence at my tears; for I am a stranger with Thee, a sojourner, as all my fathers were.”, Hagiographers, Psalms, ch. 39, v. 13, <https://www.sefarim.fr/Hagiographes_Psaumes_39_13.aspx>.

37. Trigano (2012) mentions the tradition, in some Jewish communities, to leave a corner of one’s home unpainted in order to be reminded of the illusion that one is rooted in his home, can fully identify with, and enjoy complete ownership of it.

38. The original form, the meaning and understanding that “lies under” the current welcoming expression is Lekabèl panim chel michéou, where “panim” (the faces) chel (of), take the construct state of “pné”. The morphological form of the construct state or smikhút is common in Hebrew (Wikipedia, “construct”).

39. The original form of the expression is Lekabèl étt “panim chel” haorkhim, where “panim chel” takes on the same construct state of pené.

40. PNM in Hebrew.

41. “The meaning of the word zeman is more precise than the word we use when we say ‘time’. Zeman refers to a time span, the time that it takes (to accomplish something) [...]. It is how long everything lasts, is the deployment of the moment, its thickness, the lived time, the non-mathematical time, the time of preparation, of the construction of things”. My translation (Ouaknin, 2017: 48).


43. The Jewish tradition sees multiple hidden meanings in every minute aspect of the text of the Hebrew Bible, be it a sentence, a letter, a sign or a period, within the perspective that it continues needing to be read and interpreted according to tradition as well as to the perspectives of each new generation, breathing life into the text in a continuous movement of questioning, exploring and unveiling of meaning.

44. The following print א is the serif print font for the letter bet (b). The Hebrew language word for house is “bayit”. Beit is the construct state of bayit e.g., bayit chel ha sefer (the house of the book, i.e., a school) becoming bet HaSefer. Such construct states are common, e.g., bet HaMikdash (the house of holiness i.e., the Temple), Bet HaKnesset (the meeting house i.e., the synagogue), etc.

45. Berechit (ברְכִית, In the beginning) and bara (בָּרָא, created), the complete first verse translation into English being: In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. Torah, Genesis, ch. 1, v. 1 (Berechit - בראשית), <https://www.sefarim.fr/Pentateuque_Gen%E8se_1_3.aspx>.


34. “For we are strangers before Thee, and sojourners, as all our fathers were: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is no abiding.”, Hagiographers, Chronicles 1, ch. 29, v. 15, <https://www.sefarim.fr/Hagiographes_Choeniques%2010115.aspx>.

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46. For the philosophical foundations of “the caress” metaphor as a form of interpretation, see Lévinas (1971: 288). The metaphor of the caress also sets up Judaism’s philosophy and literature ethical model of action, known as “tikkun olam”, or repair of the world, that should take place in a world yet to be made, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tikkun_olam>.

47. The noun Rosh means “head”, to be understood here as “beginning”.

48. My translation of notes taken during the radio program “Talmudiques” (Ouaknin, 2016b).

49. The noun Rosh means “head”, to be understood here as “beginning”.

50. My translation of notes taken during the radio program “Talmudiques” (Ouaknin, 2016b).

51. “Shema Israel,” “Hear, O Israel”, (Deuteronomy, 6: 4) is a prayer that encapsulates the monotheistic essence of Judaism. It is a centerpiece of the morning and evening prayer services.

52. “And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up”, Torah, Deuteronomy, ch. 6, v. 7 (Vae't'hanan - ה'תנן), <https://www.sefarim.fr/Pentateuque_Deut%E9ronome_6_7.aspx>.

53. “And thou shalt write them upon the door-posts of thy house, and upon thy gates.”, Torah, Deuteronomy, ch. 6, v. 9 (Vae't'hanan - ה'תנן), <https://www.sefarim.fr/Pentateuque_Deut%E9ronome_6_10.aspx>.

54. To the exclusion of certain too small rooms, which are not considered to be habitable, and toilets and bathrooms which are associated with impurity as well as the daily renewed struggle to achieve cleanliness and getting closer to purity.

55. My translation of notes taken during Ouaknin’s talk (Ouaknin, 2016b).

ABSTRACTS

Hospitality as a value originates from religious traditions, be they Greek and Roman, embodied by the New Testament or the Hebrew Bible. Their prescriptive force remains as the foundation of the view of hospitality still ongoing today in the Jewish tradition, thus constituting the other pole of the tension between hospitality as a value, and hospitality as modern practice. This pole of values will be addressed through the ethical and practical lived experiences and approaches of the Hebrew Bible. It is difficult to be hospitable. Punishments for breaches of the laws of hospitality amount to acknowledging this obligation as a trial for both hosted and welcoming host. I have developed the concept of hospitality as the great trial of and, indeed, the great adventure of dwelling (Serfaty, 2016). Why is hospitality the great trial of dwelling? What is at stake in the risk of hospitality drifting into hostility? I will address that question by defining and further exploring the experience of dwelling and the issues of the inhabitants’ interiority and secrecy. The conclusion of this chapter will take us back to the Jewish tradition regarding the intimate links between home, hospitality and journeying, through the exploration of the multiple emblematic meanings of one of the letters of its alphabet, the letter B (bet) and of the mezuzah, the piece of parchment enclosed in a case that is placed on the doorposts of Jewish homes.

L’hospitalité en tant que valeur est issue des traditions religieuses, qu’elles soient grecques et romaines, incarnées par le Nouveau Testament ou la Bible hébraïque. Leur force prescriptive reste le fondement de la vision de l’hospitalité toujours actuelle, constituant ainsi l’autre pôle d’une tension entre l’hospitalité comme valeur, et l’hospitalité comme pratique moderne. Cette
tension entre valeur et pratique moderne sera abordée dans ce chapitre à travers les expériences vécues et les approches éthiques et pratiques de la Bible hébraïque. Il est difficile d’être hospitalier. Les punitions pour les infractions aux lois de l’hospitalité sont la preuve que cette obligation est une épreuve pour l’hôte comme pour la personne accueillie. J’ai développé le concept d’hospitalité comme la grande épreuve de notre façon d’habiter et en fait, la grande aventure dans le processus de se sentir chez-soi (Serfaty, 2016). Pourquoi l’hospitalité est-elle la grande épreuve de notre façon d’habiter ? Quel est l’enjeu du risque de dérive de l’hospitalité vers l’hostilité ? Je répondrai à cette question en définissant et en approfondissant l’expérience du fait d’habiter et les enjeux de l’intériorité et du secret chez les habitants. La conclusion de ce chapitre nous ramènera à la tradition juive concernant les liens intimes entre la maison, l’hospitalité et le voyage, à travers l’exploration des multiples significations emblématiques d’une des lettres de son alphabet, la lettre B (bet) et de la mezouzah, le morceau de parchemin enfermé dans un étui qui est placé sur les montants des portes des maisons juives.

INDEX

Mots-clés: hospitalité, hostilité, migration, chez-soi, judaïsme, mezouzah
Keywords: hospitality, hostility, migration, home, Jewish tradition, mezouzah

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