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# The Origins of Hospitality and Tourism

**Kevin D O’Gorman**

**Editing Consultant: John Cousins**

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# 7

## Charitable Hospitality

This chapter focuses on hospitality for the needy and considers how throughout history, even when religion is subjugated, there has always been recognition of the importance of hospitality *in necessitudine* or charitable hospitality. A brief historical summary is presented of the Abrahamic model of hospitality, which is shared by the three monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. It concludes by reflecting on the constantly evolving religious practice of providing hospitality to those in most need, through exploring this aspect of hospitality, which is often overlooked in the current hospitality management literature.

### 7.1 The Abrahamic model of hospitality

In the story of Abraham, there is the classic domestic hospitality event. Where Abraham and Sarah show gracious receptiveness to three strangers at their home and oasis among the 'Oaks of Mamre'. This story is actually the occasion of God's appearance (a 'theophany') in anthropomorphic disguise; this is done to protect the host in response to the dictum of Exodus 33:20 'see God and you die!' The occasion of hospitality has become the occasion of divine visitation and revelation. Abraham is central to any religious comprehension of hospitality; for example all three great monotheistic traditions consider his behaviour as the ideal model of hospitality. The following pericope is taken from the Torah, or the Christian Book of Genesis, (18:2– 8) and parallels to this text are in the Qur'ān (15:51; 51:24):

*Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. He quickly left the entrance to his tent to meet them. He bowed low to the ground. He said, 'My lord, if you are pleased with me, don't pass me by. Let a little water be brought. All of you can wash your feet and rest under this tree. Let me get you something to eat to give you strength. Then you can go on your way. I want to do this for you now that you have come to me.' 'All right', they answered. 'Go ahead and do it'. So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah.*

**Chapter extract**

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