If they appear at the threshold
If they take the form of man, woman, and infant
The sky carries the weight of mountains
Children are straggling behind
How shall I welcome the stranger
If they stand at the threshold
If they arrive through dream, lore, or prognostication
If they don’t know if they are coming or going
I see they carry the stone of sorrow
The Red Sea has parted but not for them
I set a table before them
I light two candles. The flames leap to reveal blasted mountains
Moses has thrown down the stone tablets
Aaron has confiscated the gold from the women’s ears and fashioned a hollow calf
If they appear, stripped of possessions
The children are coughing
The infant is subdued to silence
If I could pray
I would pray for the sons the blood of the lamb has not protected
I would pray for the tribe abandoned by Moses-up-the-mountain communing with Yahweh
They appear, mute, insistent

They ignore my offer of bread

One of the flames is consuming the house and the other, casting shadows on stones

If what they want of me is my attention