Vayera

The tent, the gate, the altar.

GENESIS 18:1–22:24 · SHABBAT, OCTOBER 31, 2026 · HAFTARAH: II KINGS 4:1–37

Vayera sets radical welcome against violent inhospitality: Abraham's open tent, Sodom's besieged gate, a cast-out son heard in the wilderness, a laugh that would not stay hidden, and a knife an angel stays.

Care note: this portion includes sexual violence, women offered to a mob, expulsion, and the binding of a child. Name it at the start; step out and back in freely.

KEY TEXTS

Genesis 18:1
God appears at Mamre; Abraham, still recovering, runs to three strangers and serves a feast. Tradition pictures his tent open on all four sides — hakhnasat orchim, welcoming guests, as the portion's positive command.

Ezekiel 16:49 — the prophet names Sodom's sin
Arrogance, plenty, and ease — yet the poor and needy went unsupported. Amy Soule (Keshet, 2010) pairs Genesis 19:5 with Judges 19: in both, a mob demands a male guest and women are offered instead. Her point, in brief: rape is rape, whatever the sexes involved. Greenberg reads Sodom as sex used for humiliation and domination, not consensual love.

Genesis 19:9
The mob turns on Lot himself — a foreigner who dared welcome outsiders and, in their words, act as judge. Welcoming the stranger is the city's real taboo.

Genesis 21:17
Expelled to the wilderness, Hagar weeps — and God hears the boy where he is, then opens her eyes to a well. Blessing, the text insists, is not zero-sum: Ishmael is promised nationhood too.

Genesis 22:2 — the Akedah
Abraham is told to take the son he loves to Moriah. An angel stays the knife; a ram is offered instead. The guide flags this honestly: unlike Sodom, the Akedah has almost no established queer commentary yet — the group writes its first midrash itself.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Eight prompts for paired study, full-group conversation, or personal reflection.

1 · The famous story and the forgotten one
Why is Genesis 19 famous and Judges 19 not? What work does that selective memory do?

2 · Reclaiming a text
Ezekiel names arrogance and abandoning the poor — not sexuality. When has a text been used against you, and what did reclaiming it take?

3 · Tent or gate?
What makes a Jewish space a tent rather than a gate? When have you experienced each?

4 · Who gets offered up?
In Genesis 19 and Judges 19, men offer women to protect male honor. Who gets offered up in our communities today — and who decides?

5 · Two ways of seeing
Lot's wife looks back and freezes; Hagar lifts her eyes and sees a well. Which way of seeing do you need right now?

6 · Seen through concealment
Sarah laughs, denies it, and is told she did laugh. When has being truly seen felt like rebuke — and when like grace?

7 · Refusing to choose a son
The rabbis read Ishmael's expulsion and Isaac's binding on the two days of Rosh Hashanah. What changes when we refuse to choose which son matters?

8 · Write the first queer midrash
The Akedah has almost no queer commentary yet. Where would you begin — Abraham, Isaac, the ram, or the angel?

THE 75-MINUTE SESSION

10 min	Read Genesis 18:1–15 aloud; name a welcome you have never forgotten.
20 min	Sodom in paired lenses: Genesis 19:5 beside Ezekiel 16:49 and Soule's Judges 19 pairing.
15 min	Choose a text study: the women of chapter 19, or Hagar and the well (chapter 21).
15 min	The Akedah: obedience, conscience, and the group's own first queer midrash.
15 min	Discussion questions, one closing word, and the blessing both sons receive.

Distilled from the Vayera Deep Dive study guide · Torah Through an LGBTQ+ Lens with Mikki · In the full guide, interpretive claims are labeled traditional, modern queer reclamation, or study-leader extension. Classical citations link to Sefaria.