
ABRAHAM: UNDER THE BLESSING OF GOD

Grade Level:5-6 /10-12y




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Philosophy/Ethic:

Values and Norms – Meaning and Blessing

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Key Words

Abraham, religious experience, luck and blessing

Competences/Learning Outcomes

- Students should gain a critically differentiating relationship to what it means to wish someone good luck or to convey a blessing.
- Students can become aware of the fact that it is only possible to speak meaningfully of blessing and promise in the context of religious experiences.
- Students can show the parallels in the understanding of blessing between the figure of Abraham and the fairy tale "Sterntaler".

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Descriptions



Philosophy/Ethic Lesson Plan: Values and Norms – Meaning and Blessing

Relation to life: The philosophy/ethics teaching objective of this module is to experience the phenomenon of blessing as an experience of the religious horizon of human life. Blessing and promise can only be meaningfully spoken of in the context of religious experience. As a competence experience for students, this means concretely: (a) students should gain a critically differentiating relationship to what it means to wish someone good luck or to convey a blessing; (b) students can become aware of the fact that it is only possible to speak meaningfully of blessing and promise in the context of religious experiences; (c) for ethics students, it is particularly possible in this topic to experience the religious aspect of religion(s).

Philosophical subject reference: According to Aristotle, our human life is geared towards succeeding in life and doing well. Aristotle calls this goal happiness, "perfect well-being", Greek *eudaimonia*. We all realise this in our daily experiences when we wish for happiness; we wish that our actions, our lives, are really directed towards this *eudaimonia*. We should speak of blessing and promise and corresponding wishes only when it is about a level exceeding this happiness, when we realize that perfect well-being is humanly impossible, or at least can never be completely achieved by human activity. This is also the view of Aristotle, who considers *eudaimonia* to be a necessary orientation goal, but not a goal that can actually be achieved, but which we nevertheless want to and can live in the hope of perfect well-being, a hope that we can of course only understand as a promise, as an encouragement, as a blessing, through a higher power than ourselves; the religions call it God, the one to whom we all owe our lives and the deepest meaning of our lives - neither of which we can bestow on ourselves. People who trust in this meaning in their lives, i.e. believe in it, we call religious.

Textual reference: The paradigm (not only example!) of such a religious experience is Abraham, the father of all those people who, like him, are religious, i.e. trust in God and his promise. The slightly rewritten text M11 provides the decisive evidence for this, handed down for 3000 years. The Sterntaler fairy tale (picture M10) shows a striking topological parallel to this, drawing the religious context of Abraham and his experience of blessing as well as the orientation of human life towards happiness (Aristotle) at the same time vividly into everyday experiences.



First Phase: Development of the Topic in Own Subject Lessons

Teaching Steps	Ethics/Philosophy Lessons
Overall Lesson Objectives / Competences for the Forum	Students can tell the difference between the understanding of blessing or happiness in Abraham and explain and present the fairy tale "Sterntaler". <i>Presentation Material:</i> M10 (on Overhead Projector or as Poster).
Entry	Students listen to or sing the song M4. They open up elements of meaning in the song: (Life) Ways – Happiness-Blessings-Health-Cheerfulness. Students understand the meaning and limits of (happiness) wishes and pledges.
Elaboration I	Name and identify picture elements from the Abraham picture M5.
Fuse I	Students relate picture and song (M5/M4) to the theme "Blessing-Promise". Teacher collects key words on the blackboard.
Elaboration II	Students open up the Sterntaler picture M10 and compare it with the Abraham picture M5.
Fuse II	Students compile their comparisons orally.
Elaboration III	Students read the text M11/E on Abraham and develop it with the help of tasks. They explain the specificity of blessing and promise in a religious sense.
Fuse III	Students recognise the text elements M11/E in picture M5.
Consolidation / Completion	Students write an independent summary with the help of the short info text M11/E.

Second and Third Phase: Presentation and Exchange in Mixed Small Groups at Stations

- Find these phases in the **"Guidance for Teachers"** on:

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Fourth Phase: Reflection in Own Subject

- Find these phases in the **"Guidance for Teachers"** on:

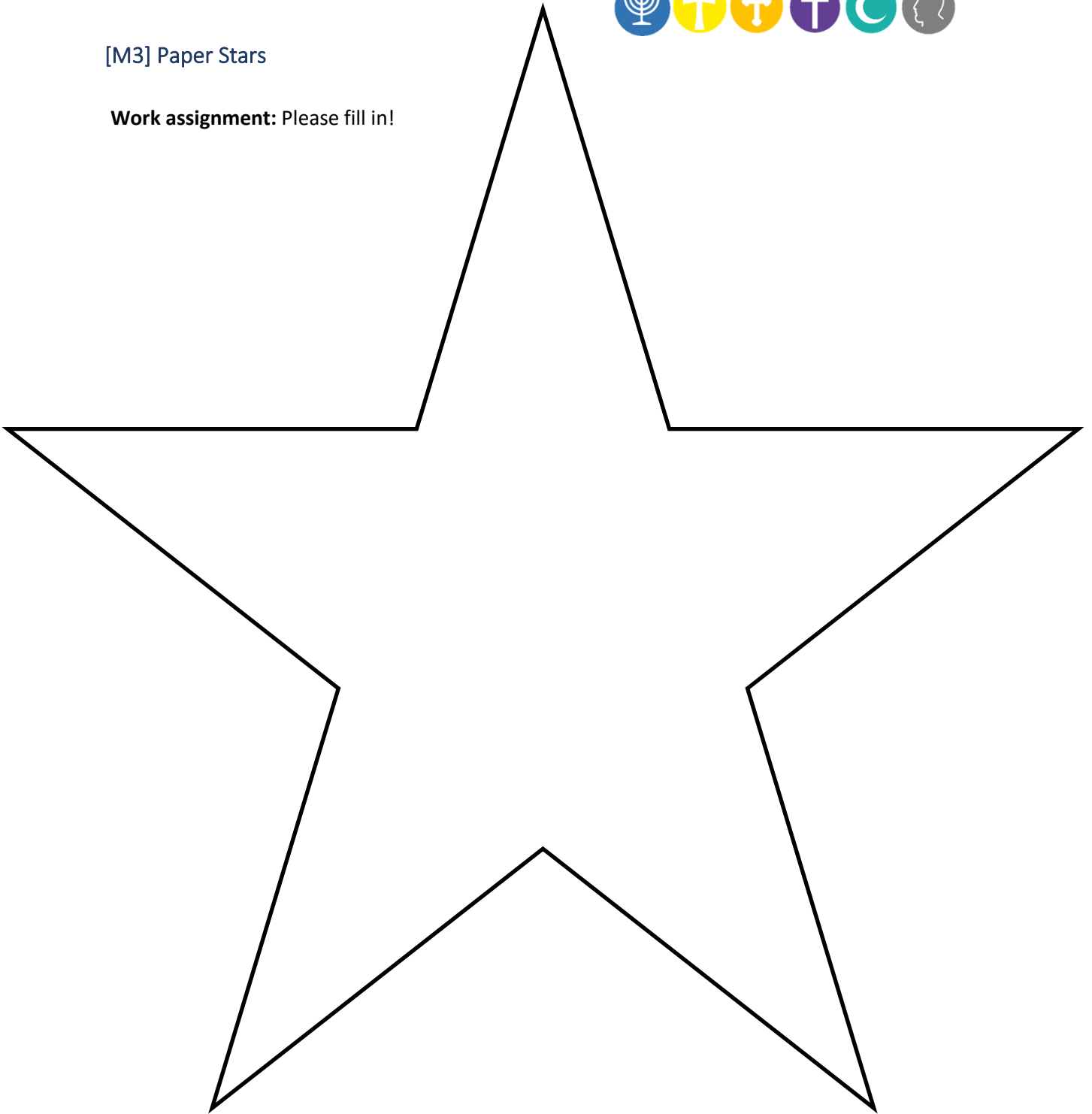
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Material

[M3] Paper Stars

Work assignment: Please fill in!





[M4] "Viel Glück und viel Segen" – A German Birthday Song

Viel Glück und viel Segen, auf all deinen Wegen, Gesundheit und Frohsinn, sei auch mit dabei.

The song can be played on YouTube:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bx_UUKfWWOw

Translation:

Much happiness and blessing / on a-ll your wa-ys, may health and prosperity (sometimes also: cheerfulness) / be there as well.

Work assignments and impulse questions (especially for ethics lessons):

1. Who knows this song/has sung/heard it before?
2. On what occasion is it sung?
3. What should be expressed by singing the song?
4. Why are birthday wishes considered special?

Possible impulse questions for classroom dialogue:

- "in all your ways": How is this different from short-term wishes?
- "Happiness": Happiness in life means ...
- "Health", "cheerfulness": Why are these important life wishes? What else could be part of it? What would you wish for?
- "Blessing": What could be meant by wishing someone a blessing?
- From whom/through what could we receive something like blessings?
- What might we mean by a "blessed life"?
- By what right/meaning can someone wish me happiness for the whole of my life? What does it depend on? Who guarantees it? ...
- Why then do we sing happiness and blessings to each other with this song?





[M5] Abraham's Promise



Wiener Genesis, manuscript from the 6th century, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek

Now the Lord said to Abram: 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you [...], and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' (Gen 12:1-3)

The Lord said to Abraham: "I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore." (Gen 22:17)

Work assignments:

- Underline all the statements in the two passages of the Bible that appear in the 6th century picture.
- Match the statements that you have underlined to the sections of the picture with arrows.

Write down in your own words what blessing means to Abraham.





[M10] The Fairytale of „Sterntaler“



Work assignment:

1. Describe your impression. Consider the song of M4.
2. Precisely describe the details:
 - 2.1. What do you know of the fairy tale of "Sterntaler"? Can you retell it?
 - 2.2. Why is the girl alone in the forest wearing only a light shirt?
 - 2.3. Where do the stars come from? Why do they gather in her shirt? What does it stand for?
3. Compare with the picture of M5.
 - 3.1. Do you know the background story? What is happening here?
 - 3.2. Where is Abraham standing? What is standing "before" him? Does he want or have to go there? Can he? Under what circumstances?
 - 3.3. What do the stars mean for Abraham?
4. Compare both pictures. Why are the protagonists given stars? Who is giving them away?





[M11] A Story from the Biblical Tradition

A story from the biblical tradition

One day Abram heard God's word: "Go away from your country, away from your relatives, away from your father's house and name. Leave everything, leave everything behind and start something new. Go to the land that I will show you! There I will make you a great nation! And I will bless you and make your name great! You yourself will be a blessing to many!" So Abram went away, just as God had said. And they set out for the land of Canaan, and passed through the land unto Sichem, where was a holy tree. There Abram built an altar to God. And he went on into the hill country east of Beth-el. There he stayed, pitched his tent, built an altar there too, and prayed to God, praising God's name with thanksgiving.

And Abram heard God's word again: "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." Abram answered, "God, what can you give me, since we are childless?" Then God said, "Look up to heaven and count the stars, if you can count them! That is how numerous your descendants will be." And Abram believed God.

(Retold by HB Petermann with reference to Gen 11 and 15)

The last sentence in the text read "And Abram believed God". - This sentence sums up why Abraham is regarded today as the father of the Abrahamic religions, of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, or more precisely: as the father of people who - like him - believe in one God. All Jews, Christians and Muslims refer to Abraham as the original believer; they see themselves as believers because, like Abraham, they believe. We readers today, believers of the Abrahamic religions, believers of other religions, also non-believers, can recognise from the figure of Abraham and from the blessing and promise that he experienced from God, what distinguishes a believing person.

Work assignments:

1. What parallels can you see in the text to the image of Abraham?
2. Underline in the text where blessing is mentioned.
3. What exactly is the content of the blessing that Abraham receives here? Write down the corresponding passages. Share your findings with your neighbour.
4. Think carefully and make a note: *Who* exactly should bless whom?
5. Consider: In the religions, instead of the *blessing that* Abraham experiences here, one also speaks of *promise*.

What could be meant more precisely by this word? Do all people need something like a promise? Are there people who can become an example for others through their promise?

6. Using the text and the picture, we have tried to understand what *blessing* and *promise* mean. Summarise the meaning in your own words and explain your text to the class.



Expectation horizons for the materials



Philosophy/Ethic Lessons: Values and Norms – Meaning and Blessing

M5/E:

Now the Lord said to Abram: 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you [...], and in you all the families of the earth



The Lord said to Abraham: "I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore." (Gen 22:17)

M11/E:

Blessing = setting out into a new land/with many people (great nation)/numerous descendants/excellent (role model) role for many people/blessing content comes from God. God blesses Abraham/Abraham shall (thereby!) be a blessing to the many
=> Who is/what does "God" stand for here? What does Abraham do that makes him a blessing for many?



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Picture Credits

M4 Lyrics and melody from Werner Gneist

„Blessing for Abraham and Sarah“, Jenny Korneck

„Designing a booklet page with the tops of the folding cards“, Jenny Korneck

„Sterntaler Drawing“, by Ayşe Yorulmaz

„There I have experienced blessings“, Jenny Korneck

Wiener Genesis, manuscript from the 6th century, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek

