
ABRAHAM: UNDER THE BLESSING OF GOD

Grade Level:5-6 /10-12y




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Protestant Religious Education: Blessing and Promise

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Key Words

Abraham, blessing, promise

Competences/Learning Outcomes

- Students will understand the meaning of blessing by the example of Abraham's life.
- Students reflect on blessings in their own life.
- Students experience the impact of a promise.

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Descriptions



Protestant Religious Education: Blessing and Promise

Relation to life: Many students know the birthday song "Viel Glück und viel Segen". At the same time, they experience how a blessing is promised to them in school services or in the closing rituals of religious education lessons. By studying the promises of blessing from the story of Abraham, this understanding is expanded and the deeper meaning of blessing and promise is reflected upon. Students are guided to reflect on experiences of blessing (and thus on "traces of God in the world").

Textual reference: The idea of blessing runs through the stories of the fathers in the Old Testament. It is clear that God is the giver of blessings and that blessings are manifested in prosperity, possessions and also offspring. "In the case of the divine blessing of human beings... the result is a "godliness" of the world or of human beings that implies well-being and salvation".¹ Abraham himself is blessed by God right at the beginning (Genesis 12:2) and at the same time in him all the generations on earth (Genesis 12:3). To be distinguished from this, and yet indispensable for the fulfilment of the blessing, is the promise of descendants (Genesis 13:16f; 17:6; 22:17). It receives a prominent meaning in the story of the visit of the three men to Abraham (Genesis 18:1-15).

Theological reference: The medieval German word "Segen" (blessing) is derived from the Latin loanword *signare* (to draw, designate, distinguish). In the Old as well as in the New Testament, it always means the holistic action of God on human beings, including their circumstances. With the blessing, creatures are marked as belonging to God. Thus, according to Protestant understanding, there is no blessing of objects. For the New Testament author Paul, Christ is the one who brings God's blessing to Abraham among men and through whom God includes all the world in the history of blessing with his people (cf. Gal 3:6-14).²

Ritual reference: The biblical testimony shows that blessing is a gift of God - it can be passed on by people, but God remains the actual agent. Blessing as a promise and assurance is a performative (i.e. an action that is performed simultaneously with the linguistic utterance it describes) linguistic act. God's blessing is bestowed on people in church services, at rites and in individual blessings, and it shows God's support in good times as well as in bad. The so-called Aaronic blessing (Num 6:22-27) was not initially adopted by the early Christian community. However, Martin Luther included it as the final blessing in the Order of the German Mass (1526). Here, this Old Testament blessing formula has its permanent place in the Protestant service to this day



First Phase: Development of the Topic in Own Subject Lessons

Teaching Steps	Protestant Religious Education
Overall Lesson Objectives / Competences for the Forum	Students can explain and differentiate what blessing and promise means for Abraham and for them personally. <i>Presentation Material:</i> M3/E
Entry	Teacher places the word card "Blessing" (M1a) in the middle; Student express first associations (or writing discussion on posters in groups).
Elaboration I	Each student fills in the folding card M2a.
Fuse I	Students present their results and listen to or sing the song M4: "Viel Glück und viel Segen".
Elaboration II	Teacher places a text card with blessing for Abraham (Genesis 12:3) M1c in the middle. Students consider where and how Abraham experienced God's blessing and write an example on a star (M3/E).
Fuse II	Students pin stars to the sky.
Elaboration III	Teacher: What do Abraham and Sarah still miss? The small group from Module 1 presents the picture and text on Genesis 15; Teacher puts a question mark on the "sky". Teacher places the word card "Promise" M1b in the middle; Students associate. Teacher formulates a pictorial dictation on Genesis 18:1-15. Each student transmits this on the inside of the second folding card (M2b).
Fuse III	Each student designs a complete page in the exercise book with the cover pages of the folding cards for Blessing and Promise and corresponding Bible verses: Genesis 12:3 and 18:14.
Consolidation / Completion	Each student fills in a summary table for the whole unit short headings for Genesis 15 and 18. Optionally, they complete the "starry sky" with blessing wishes or their own experiences of blessing, which they had previously written down on the Stars (M3).

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 Teaching

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Material



[M1] Word Cards

M 1a /b Word Cards

BLESSING

PROMISE

M 1c Text Card

**God says to Abraham:
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.**

(Genesis 12:2)





[M2] Folding Cards

M 2a Folding Card for Blessing (inside)

<p><i>Blessing</i> means to me ...</p>	Here I've been <i>blessed</i> ...
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M 2b Folding Card for Genesis 18:1-15: Three men visit Abraham and Sarah ... (inside)

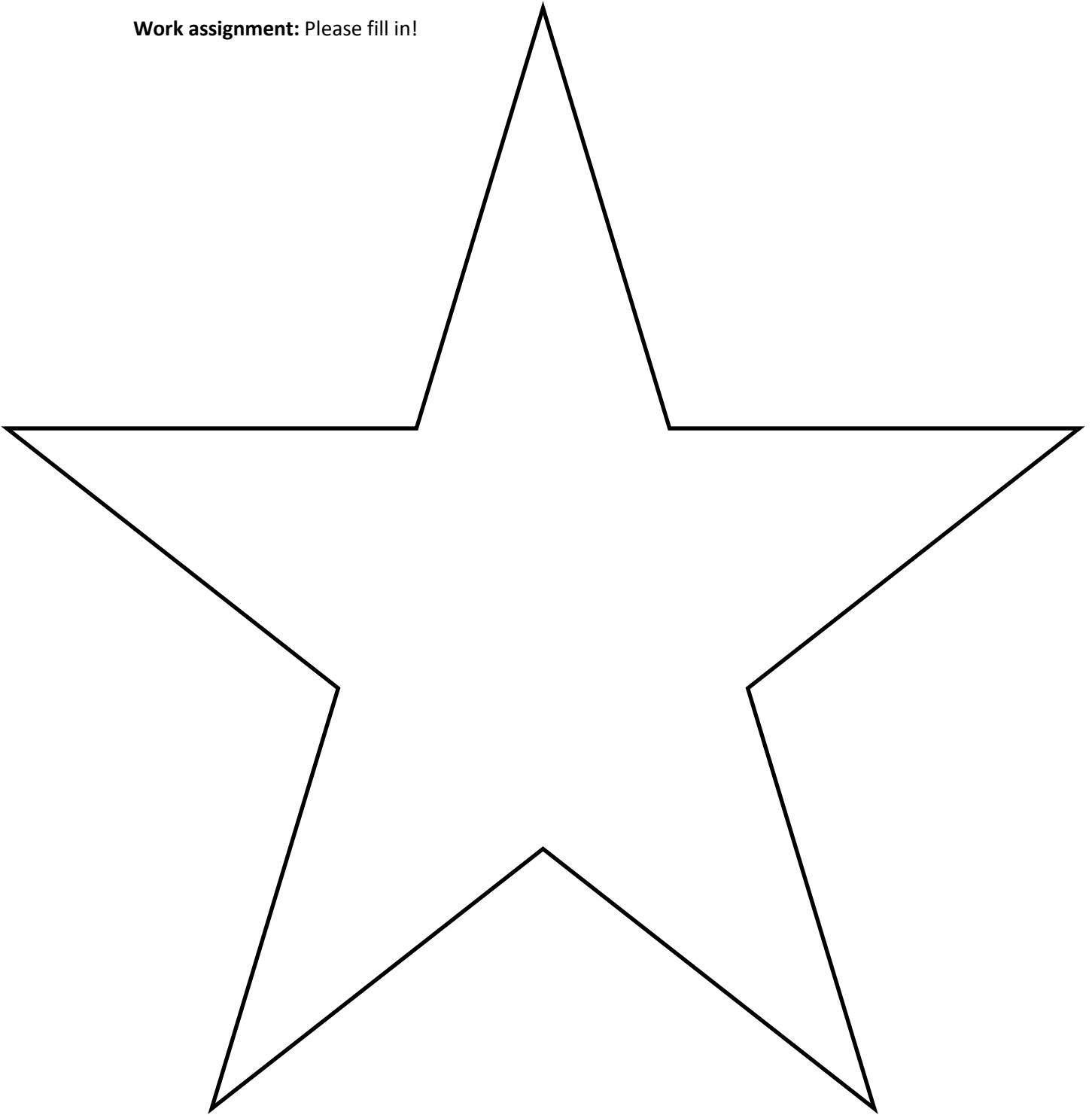
Draw what you hear!	
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[M3] Paper Stars

Work assignment: Please fill in!



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[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?



Expectation horizons for the materials

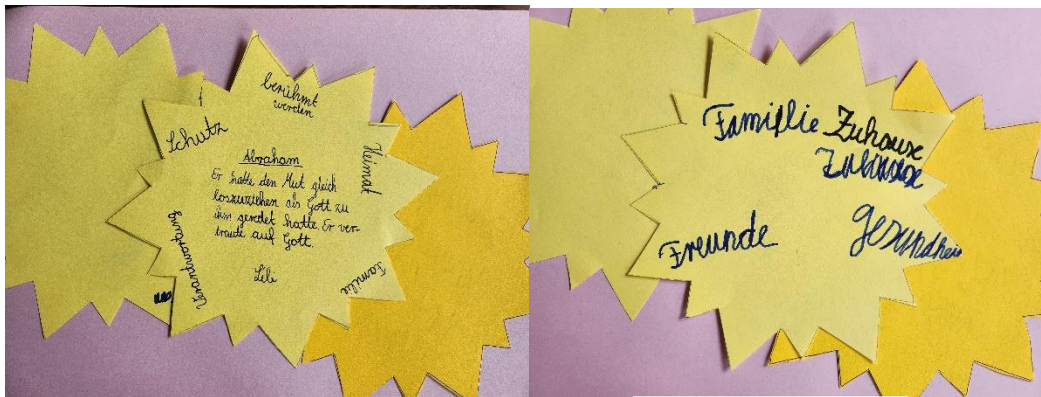


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M3/E:

What blessing means to Abraham: "God's protection and companionship on the way from Ur to Canaan (Gen 12:1-9); that God wants a great nation to arise from him (Gen 12:2); that God wants to make him famous (Gen 12:2); that God wants to bless people through Abraham (Gen 12:3); that he can pass on God's blessing (Gen 12:3)"

Examples for securing results M3/E:



Blessing for Abraham and Sarah

There I have
experienced
blessings



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M4 Lyrics and melody from Werner Gneist

M3/E Photos: Eva Jenny Korneck

