

Grab 'n' Go Lesson **VETERAN'S FARM**

Good People Grab 'n' Go Lessons are designed to provide educators with all of the education materials needed in one document to teach a 60-90 minute lesson on a specific topic. Some Grab 'n' Go Lessons will require photo copies while others will require internet access and a projector and speakers; some will require markers while others will require post-it notes each one is unique. We encourage educators to adapt the materials to their environment and learners.

SUPPLIES: plant pots (one for every 3 people), organic soil, plastic gloves, bandanas (two for every 2-3 people), small shovels, watering cans, organic herb seeds, butcher paper/plastic table cloths; projector/laptop/internet/screen/speakers; text study sheets; copies of the Good Person Profile; pens/pencils

12-18 minutes

Arrival Activity:

1. Layout the tablecloth or butcher paper to cover the tables you will be using for this arrival activity.
2. Place on them a pot for every 3 people with a cup of soil, sets of gloves, a watering can, a few seeds, a shovel.
3. Divide them into groups of three.
4. Instruct the team – one person is blindfolded with a bandana and one person has both hands tied together with a bandana. The third person has full function.
5. The team must work together to plant the seeds in the pot. Everyone **MUST** participate.
6. When everyone has finished potting their plant seeds, have them clean up and come back together.
7. Discuss:
 - What was difficult about this task?
 - How did you work together as a team to problem solve?
 - What challenges did you face?
 - How did you know how to plant the seeds and what to do with your supplies that were in front of you?
 - How did it feel when you finished and were successful?
 - Imagine a month or so from now – what will you be able to see? Smell? Use these for? Who can benefit from your planting these herbs?
 - How do people learn how to garden, plant, harvest on a more professional basis?

5-7 minutes Set Induction

1. Share: As our society has gotten much more urban (city-centered) we have fewer and fewer people who are skilled at planting and farming.
2. Ask: Do any of you know someone who is a professional farmer? What do they farm? Do you know how they learned the skill of farming?
3. Explain: The average American farmer is between 57 and 60 years old with four farmers retiring for every one entering the field.
4. Ask: What is the implication of this for our future?
5. Explain: One group of people who are often in need of new job training are military veterans. After spending many years fighting for our country, some are in need of help re-entering back into civilian life.
6. Ask:
 - a. What is PTSD? (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) Why do many veterans suffer from this disease? How does it impact their lives?
 - b. What other issues do some veterans come back home with (physical disability from being wounded)?
 - c. How did your experience of planting seeds with two people who had physical restrictions mimic what some veterans face?
7. Explain: Today we are going to learn about a forward-thinking man, Adam Burke, who realized that he could combine PTSD support and job training for veterans with the need for us coaching more career farmers.

8-12 minutes The Good Person Profile: Adam Burke

Read aloud Adam's story or copy and distribute to participants (handout for copying at end of lesson)



A lot has happened since the day Adam Burke found himself lying unconscious on the battlefield in 2009. After almost nine years serving his country, Adam was but two weeks out from returning home from his 16-month tour of duty in Iraq when a mortar attack threw him to the ground as he was trying to rescue one of his soldiers who had been shot in an ambush. An explosive soon went off which left Adam with a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and ultimately, a Purple Heart. But, in spite of those very serious injuries he vowed, if he made it home alive, to give back.

As it is with the tens of thousands of other soldiers who experience PTSD and TBI, Adam's recovery was slow and difficult. He found himself constantly on edge and unable to concentrate, and longed for the life he had before his service began. How could Adam return to a more normal life free of stress and anxiety? A life where loud noises and sudden motion didn't bring him fear and flashbacks of life on the battlefield?

With his family's encouragement, Adam returned to farming which was reminiscent of his childhood days on his family's blueberry farm. A new calm and sense of well-being came over him as he plowed and tilled and planted blueberry bushes in the Florida heat. If working the land was therapeutic for him, why not for others? With that idea in mind, Adam reached out to others who helped him begin Veterans Farm in Jacksonville, Florida, a city which is a major hub for all of the armed forces and is filled with many, many veterans suffering as Adam did.

Today, Veterans Farm offers soldiers with physical and emotional disabilities a safe place to recover from their war experiences and become whole again. In a strict work environment, Adam's program offers a six-month fellowship which attracts veterans to the farm where they work side by side with him, planting, tending and harvesting the land and reaping the therapeutic benefits associated with this work. During this time they learn not only about farming but also about responsibility, and in the process they heal.

While datil peppers (the *hottest* pepper known to man) and blueberries are the farm's main crop, veterans working there grow additional crops which are sold at local farmer's markets and some have even begun raising livestock like goats that can produce delicious milk and cheese.

In 2012, President Obama presented Adam with the Presidential Citizens Medal which is the second highest civilian honor which can be bestowed and recognizes an individual "who has performed exemplary deeds or services for his or her country or fellow citizens."

With so many soldiers who have returned stateside with severe emotional and physical disabilities, Adam's model offers a welcome opportunity for these veterans to heal. That Adam chose to make this his life's work despite his own serious disabilities is something that qualifies him for the term "hero," for sure.

Discuss:

- Why do you think people who are facing crisis and tragedy often make a commitment to giving back if/when they heal?
- Why do you think it was important for Adam to return to a skill he learned as a child?
- How does working the land help people focus on healing?
- Why do you think President Obama gave Adam such a prestigious award? Why is Adam's work that of a "national hero"?

7-15 minutes Getting to Know Veterans Farm

If you have access to multiple computers, cell phones or tablets and enough internet bandwidth, you can have individuals in the group do some research about Veterans Farm by looking at these references:

Website: <http://veteransfarm.org/>

Watch these videos:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3V5EQLEBvR4> (3:25)- have the participants make notes about all the ways that Veterans Farm impacts the community

- <https://vimeo.com/64833064> (1:43) have the participants make notes about the way Adam was impacted by serving in the war and how farming has helped him
- <http://www.growingagreenerworld.com/episode308/> (start at 2:00 and go to 19:42) have the participants make notes about what motivates Adam and what motivates the other veterans; have them consider what skills the veterans learn on the farm

Read this article about Adam’s presidential award:

<http://jacksonville.com/premium/2013-02-08/story/combat-veteran-who-helps-fellow-vets-jacksonville-farm-get-white-house>

Read this article about how Veterans Farm functions as a business.

<http://money.cnn.com/2012/04/05/smallbusiness/veterans-farm/>

Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/veterans.farm>

Discuss:

- Besides helping the veterans with a career, what are the different ways that Veterans Farm helps them?
- Besides helping veterans, how does Veterans Farm help the community?
- What societal needs does Veterans Farm fill?
- What can we learn about the greater needs of our country’s veterans by learning about Veterans Farm and Adam’s story?

15-25 minutes

What’s Jewish About Adam and his work?

Included in this Grab ‘n’ Go is a Jewish Text Study sheet for your use.

Depending on the age of your participants, you may want to choose one Jewish text to explore via a projector, a few values via posters, or provide them with the entire text sheet. For advanced learners, you may want to provide a *Tanakh* for access to some of the original texts.

One method for engaging these texts:

You will notice the texts are broken into five sub-categories. Have the learners pair these categories and the texts with elements of the work that Adam and Veterans Farm engage in. Have them write next to each text one thing they learned about Adam and Veteran’s Farm that relates to the text itself.

- Healing
- Planting/Harvesting
- Liberty
- Friendship and Fellowship
- Uplifting Those in Need

Some questions for consideration:

1. Take a closer look at the texts on healing. Compare/contrast how these texts are interpreted if we are talking about physical healing versus emotional healing.
2. Read the Maimonides text under the “Uplifting Those in Need” section. This text is perhaps the most important when considering the work that Adam and Veterans Farm engages in. Why?
3. Read the Isaiah 40:4 and Hosea 10:12 texts closely. How can these texts be literal and metaphorical for the work at Veterans Farm?

4-8 minutes

The Good People Making a Difference with Veterans Farm

In the Fellowship Training Program, veterans work collaboratively to overcome war-related obstacles, learn valuable management skills and receive agricultural training, mentoring and counseling. What started as a 2.8-acre plot has grown to 19 acres. More than 160 veterans have received assistance in starting many types of businesses. Of those Adam has helped, several would-be at-risk veterans have gone on to become successful leaders in their own communities. In a country where fewer people are pursuing careers in agriculture, Adam’s efforts are also fulfilling the need for new farmers.

In addition to helping grow the fellowship program over many years, our funding has been used to fund the purchase and building of a greenhouse, support the purchase of a piece of farm equipment called a “Gator,” and to underwrite the costs of a much-needed case manager to help transition the veterans beyond the fellowship and successfully meet their personal goals.

Over the years we have had the pleasure to visit the farm, meet with the Fellows, and learn just how their participation in the program has impacted their lives. We have helped harvest peppers and have met with other volunteers on the farm.

Veterans Farm Program Profile on our website:

<https://www.goodpeoplefund.org/program/veterans-farm/>

Getting to Good

Depending on the time you have, this can either be a short conversation about some options to get involved or can be a hands-on project adjusted to your needs. Here are some hands-on ideas:

- Research local veterans programs in your community. Focus on the organizations that provide training to get veterans back to work. Contact those agencies to inquire about on-going volunteer opportunities for your learners.
- Hold a collections drive to gather donations for new small farming equipment including shovels, work gloves, watering cans, hose nozzles, etc. Ship these items to Veterans Farm.
- Have your participants make “Thank You” cards for the veterans who are in the Veterans Farm Fellowship. These cards should be created to thank them for serving our country and encouraging them in their new field of agriculture and farming.
- Contact a local farm and ask them to work with you to establish a veteran’s farming program in your community. Explain to them what you learned about Adam and Veterans Farm and partner with them to create a smaller-scale model of the program.
- Find space on your property to build a greenhouse. Invite a local farmer/gardener to come provide training to your participants and local veterans on how to grow some herbs, fruits and vegetables. Work together to tend to the plants and then donate the harvest to a local food pantry.

Your group’s *tzedakah* donations can be contributed to The Good People Fund and earmarked for our work with Veterans Farm: <https://www.goodpeoplefund.org/mitzvah-donate/>.

Why donate to The Good People Fund to distribute your *tzedakah*?

Shulhan Aruch, Yoreh De'ah 249:6

One able to motivate others to contribute receives greater reward than the giver.

Shulhan Aruch Yoreh De'ah 249:7

A person should not contribute to a *tzedakah* fund unless he knows that its management is reliable.

Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 256:1

Every Jewish community is obliged to appoint charity administrators, respected and reliable individuals who will collect from each person what they are able to contribute...and give to each poor person sufficient for their needs for the week.

Mishnah Peah 8:7

A public fund needs to be collected by no less than two people, and distributed by no less than three people.

For a copy of our Annual Report, visit:

<https://www.goodpeoplefund.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/2016-GPF-Annual-Report.pdf>



Grab and Go Lesson

VETERANS FARM

Text Resources

UPLIFTING THOSE IN NEED

Leviticus 25:35

Now in the case a countryman of yours becomes poor and his means with regard to you falter, they you are to sustain him, that he may live with you.

Maimonides, Mishnah Torah, Laws of Contributions to the Poor, Chapter 10:7

There are eight levels of Tzedaka, each one higher than the other. The highest one of all is when one takes the hand of one from Israel and gives him a gift or a loan, or engages him in a partnership, or finds him work by which he can stand on his own and not require any charity. Thus it is written: "And you strengthened the stranger who lives with you."

Pirkei Avot 2:10

Your friend's dignity should be as precious to you as your own.

FRIENDSHIP AND FELLOWSHIP

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

Two are better than one because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him that is alone when he falls, for he has not another to help him up.

Babylonian Talmud Ta'anit 7a

I have learned much from my teachers, but from my friends more than my teachers.

Pirkei Avot 2:13

[Rabban Yochanon ben Zakkai] said to [his students]: Go and see which is the good path to which a person should cleave. Rabbi Eliezer said: A good eye. Rabbi Yehoshua said: A good friend. Rabbi Yossi said: A good neighbor. Rabbi Shimon said: To foresee consequences. Rabbi Elazar said: A good heart. [Rabban Yochanon] said to them, I prefer the words of Elazar ben Arach over your words, for included in his words are all of yours.

LIBERTY

Sefat Emet, on Leviticus 25:10

The essence of being cursed is being enslaved, and the essence of blessing is liberty.

Avraham Ibn Ezra on Leviticus 25:10

A bird in liberty will sing, while in captivity it will refuse to eat and perish.

(turn over)



HARVEST/PLANTING

Pirke Avot 4:1

You shall enjoy the fruit of your labors; you shall be happy and you shall prosper.

Hosea 10:12

Plant your seeds justly but reap them with compassion.

Talmud Succah 49b

When one plants, he may or may not eat [from what he planted], but once he reaps, he will certainly be able to eat.

Isaiah 40:4

Let the rugged ground be made level, and the ridges become a plain...

Leviticus 19:9-10

And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. And you shall not glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather every grape of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and stranger; I am the Lord your God.

HEALING

Numbers 12:13

And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying: 'Heal her now, O God, I beseech Thee.'

Psalms 13:44-48

How long, O Lord, will You forget me, forever? How long will You hide Your face from me?

How long must I seek counsel within my soul, [to escape] the grief in my heart all day? How long will my enemy be exalted over me? Look! Answer me, O Lord, my God; give light to my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death. Lest my enemy say, "I have overcome him," [and] my oppressors rejoice when I falter.

I have placed my trust in Your kindness, my heart will rejoice in Your deliverance. I will sing to the Lord, for He has dealt kindly with me.

Exodus 15:26

I the Eternal, am your healer.

Leviticus 19:16

If one person is able to save another and does not save him he transgresses the commandment, "Neither shall you stand idly by the blood of your neighbor"

Baba Kamma 46B

Whoever is in pain, lead him to the physician.

Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5

And whosoever sustains and saves a single soul, it is as if that person sustained a whole world.

Abraham Joshua Heschel

Medicine is prayer in the form of a deed...The body is a sanctuary, the doctor is a priest...The act of healing is the highest form of imitation of God

The Good Person Profile ADAM BURKE



(Above) Adam (in the red shirt) and some Fellows showing off their thriving plants.

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(Above) Adam and a team building the greenhouse.