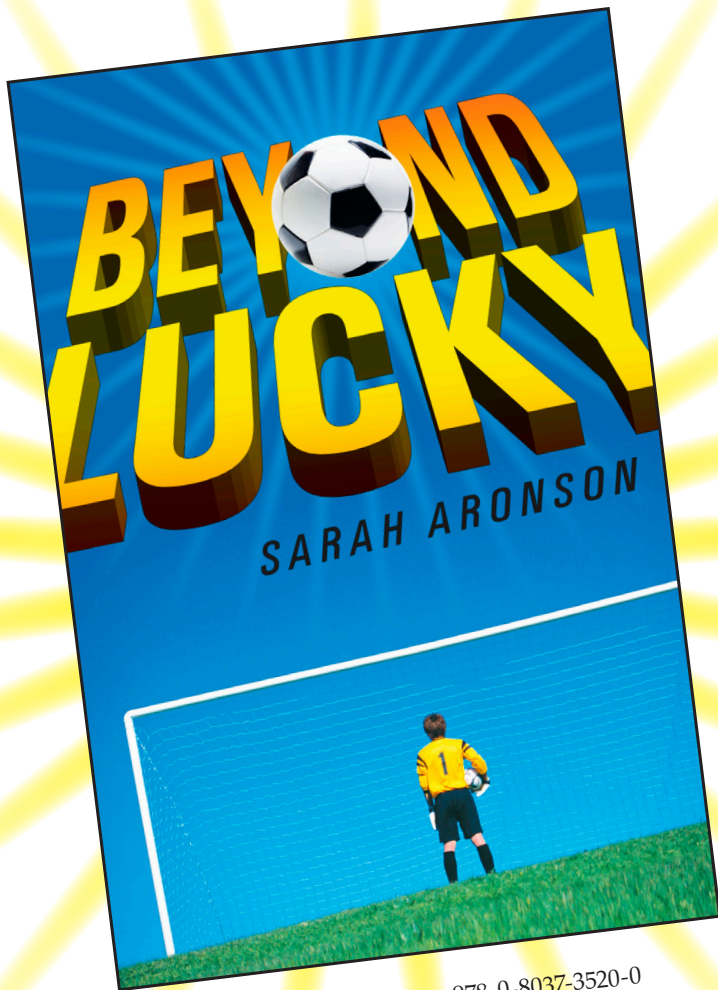


# JEWISH EDUCATOR'S GUIDE



Dial Books for Young Readers 978-0-8037-3520-0

## BEYOND LUCKY *by Sarah Aronson*

IT'S NOT EXACTLY THAT Ari Fish is obsessive compulsive. It's just that he believes in luck. That's why he recites American presidents (in order), always showers with his left hand, and talks to his poster of Wayne Timcoe (the greatest goalkeeper ever to graduate from Somerset Valley High) before he goes on

to the soccer pitch. Thomas Jefferson may have said that luck is all a matter of hard work, but Ari knows that sometimes luck is . . . luck. And to win at soccer, you need it.

When Ari finds a rare Wayne Timcoe trading card, he knows his luck has changed. Now he's going to start in the net. Mac MacDonald will learn to play nicely with Parker Llewellyn, the only girl on the team. And Ari's firefighter brother will come home safely. Right? But then Ari's Timcoe card disappears. With his luck finally run out, what can Ari put in its place?

Ari is Jewish and about to turn thirteen, and is preparing for his Bar Mitzvah ceremony. Because his birthday is in February, his rabbi requires that he choose a date in spring, so he will already be bar mitzvah—thirteen years old—when his ceremony takes place in May. While he pursues his dream of being on a championship soccer team, he is also supposed to be studying his Torah portion, writing his speech, and doing his mitzvah project. How lucky is that?

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ⚽ At the beginning of **BEYOND LUCKY**, we learn that ritual is important to Ari Fish. He must do a specific set of steps in a specific order before each soccer game or his luck will be put at risk. In Judaism, we have rituals as well. One that we perform with a specific set of steps in a specific order is the Passover Seder. Why do Jews and their families continue to celebrate Passover in this way? Do you think it has anything to do with luck?
- ⚽ In *Pirke Avot* 2:16, The Sayings of the Rabbis, we read: “He (Rabbi Tarfon) used to say, ‘It is not your obligation to complete the task, but neither are you at liberty to desist from it.’” In **BEYOND LUCKY**, when Ari’s brother Sam takes a job as a firefighter in California he tells his parents, “It’s a great opportunity. I’m tired of people who think we should leave this job to someone else.” To what is Sam referring and how does it work in partnership with Rabbi Tarfon’s quote?
- ⚽ At Temple, Ari’s rabbi answers a question about the biblical hero, Noah, with the following response: “I think the Torah is saying that nobody is perfect, but of course we should try to be the best people possible. I think we need to remember that heroes are real people, too. They make mistakes.” What do you think about this response? Ari believes the rabbi was not talking about Noah. Who was he talking about? Why? Have you ever had a hero who turned out to be less than perfect?
- ⚽ When Ari and Mac had their fight over Parker, and Mac implemented “Plan Freeze-Out,” what was your immediate reaction? Judaism puts cheating in the same category as lying and stealing. Why? Do you believe that Mac cheated in losing the game to Mooretown? Why or why not?
- ⚽ When Sam and his crew were trapped in the fire, the Fish’s community arrives to support the family. Ari calls his soccer friends. Who would you call if you found yourself in an emergency situation and needed some support?
- ⚽ As you read the book, what were your feelings about the relationship between Ari and Mac? Between Ari and Parker? Between Ari and his teammates? How did your feelings change about these relationships as the story evolved?
- ⚽ Why do you think Mac chose to move up to the premiere soccer league rather than play in the game with Parker? How did his not being on the team affect Ari?
- ⚽ What part of **BEYOND LUCKY** did you enjoy the most? Explain why.
- ⚽ Which character in **BEYOND LUCKY** would you invite to your Bar/Bat Mitzvah or your 13<sup>th</sup> birthday party? Which character in **BEYOND LUCKY** was your least favorite? Why?
- ⚽ After reading **BEYOND LUCKY** would you recommend it to your friends to read?
- ⚽ Do you think **BEYOND LUCKY** should be categorized as a Jewish book?

# TORAH STUDY

## PARSHAT NASO

(Numbers 4:21-7:89)

Ari Fish is studying for his Bar Mitzvah. His Torah portion is *Naso* (“Add up” in Hebrew). Many of the themes of this parsha are reflected in **BEYOND LUCKY**. Read the texts from *Parshat Naso* (Numbers 4:21-7:89) and the corresponding scenes from **BEYOND LUCKY** aloud and discuss the questions posed at the end of each reading to better understand this interesting piece of Torah.

### IT'S UP TO YOU!

*“I believe that every right implies a responsibility; every opportunity, an obligation; every possession, a duty.”*

—JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER, JR. (1874-1960), AMERICAN PHILANTHROPIST

Read Numbers 4:21-33 from the Torah

Read pages 157-158 from **BEYOND LUCKY**

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ⚽ What similarities do you see in the two passages?
- ⚽ What were Ari’s responsibilities?
- ⚽ Can you answer the rabbi’s questions? Were Ari’s responsibilities blessings or burdens? Are Sam’s responsibilities blessings or burdens?
- ⚽ Does it make a difference that Sam chose his job, but some of Ari’s responsibilities seem to have been thrust upon him unexpectedly?
- ⚽ Describe a situation where you have been handed a responsibility you felt unprepared for. How did you handle it? What was the end result?

### RESTORING FAITH

*“With faith, there are no questions; without faith there are no answers.”*

—THE CHOFETZ CHAIM BY RABBI YISRAEL MEIR KAGAN

Read Numbers 5:14-31 from the Torah

Read pages 224-226 from **BEYOND LUCKY** (end with “Move up to premiere.”)

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ⚽ What similarities do you see in the two passages?
- ⚽ Does it appear that Mac had betrayed his relationship with Ari in some way? How would you describe what he did?
- ⚽ Ari proposed a certain set of conditions which Mac had to do in order for him to earn forgiveness. Was that fair? Why or why not?
- ⚽ Describe a situation in which you or a friend of yours was betrayed. How was the situation resolved? Were there conditions that had to be met for the friendship to be restored?
- ⚽ How will it be possible for Ari and Mac to be friends again?

## SAY YOU'RE SORRY

*"For transgressions against God, the Day of Atonement [Yom Kippur] atones; for transgressions against other human beings, the Day of Atonement does not atone, until one has made peace with them."*

—FROM THE TALMUD

Read Numbers 5:5-10 from the Torah

Read pages 222-223 from **BEYOND LUCKY** (begin with "Jerry Mac MacDonald, the best player on our team, . . .")

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ⚽ What similarities do you see in the two passages?
- ⚽ You have read the entire book and know that Ari goes much further with what he requires of Mac in the way of apology. However, pretend that you have not read any further. How would you end this incident? What about Parker?
- ⚽ Would you still want to be friends with Mac after all that he has done? What would hurt you more: that he stole something that meant a lot to you, that he lied about it, or that he tried to blame someone else?
- ⚽ Describe a situation similar to this that you have encountered in your own life. What did you do to resolve the problem?

## A BLESSING ON YOUR HEAD

*"We are all born to be a blessing."*

—DR. RACHEL NAOMI REMEN, PHYSICIAN, AUTHOR, SPIRITUAL HEALER

Read Numbers 6:22-27 from the Torah

Read pages 246-247 from **BEYOND LUCKY** (begin with "Coach says" and end with "the privilege to coach.")

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ⚽ What similarities do you see in the two passages?
- ⚽ Describe a situation where you were receiving a blessing, but may not have realized it.

## EVERYTHING DEPENDS ON . . .

*"Customs are more powerful than laws."*

—FROM THE TALMUD

Read Numbers 5:23-26 from the Torah

Read pages 1-2 (begin with "Call me obsessive" and end with "Real Advice for Real Men") and page 76 (the paragraph that begins with "She looks a little embarrassed") from **BEYOND LUCKY**

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ⚽ What similarities do you see in the two passages?
- ⚽ Ritual pervades *Parshat Naso*, just as it does **BEYOND LUCKY**. Look for two more examples of ritual in both the Torah portion and the book. When you read these examples, what is your first impression?
- ⚽ Provide examples from your own life of rituals or small superstitions that occur on a regular basis. What do you believe might happen if these rituals were to stop?
- ⚽ What happened to Ari Fish when he stopped performing his rituals?

# ACTIVITIES

## SAYING 'THANK YOU!'

Military personnel, police men and women, and firefighters put their lives on the line so that you, your family, friends, and neighbors can be safe at home. It is important to say, "Thank you" to these courageous individuals. There are many ways to do this. Just as Ari Fish did, you can set up a collection area in your local market where you can request and gather donations, then send or deliver those packages of goodies to your designated heroes at periodic intervals. Here a few additional ideas:

**Treats for Local Helpers** Work with other kids in your school or temple to make cakes, cupcakes, or cookies or purchase them from the local bakery. Have your parent or caregiver drive you over to the local fire station or police station. Deliver the baked goods with a big thank you card. (Check with your local police and fire stations to see if they prefer store bought or homemade treats.)

**Gift Cards for Local Helpers** Work with other kids in your school or temple to purchase gift cards to local coffee stores or fast food restaurants. Have your parent or caregiver drive you over to the local fire station or police station. Deliver the gift cards with a big thank you card.

**Thank You Cards and Letters** Write cards and letters of appreciation to the fire chief and police chief expressing how much you appreciate the police officers and firefighters in your neighborhood.

**A Thank You Shabbat Service** Invite a group of firefighters, police officers, ambulance drivers, 9-1-1 operators, and anyone else who would be vital in case of an emergency, to the temple for a special "Appreciation Shabbat." Honor these brave heroes with certificates of appreciation, special blessings, and thanks from the entire Jewish community. What other ideas do you have for honoring these local heroes?

**Support Our Troops** The Union for Reform Judaism's Religious Action Center has a special "Supporting Our Troops" webpage: <http://rac.org/pubs/packets/sos/index.cfm> You will find many ideas for ways to send cards, letters, toiletries, phone cards, and food to the troops overseas. The USO (United Service Organizations) also has a number of ways to support our troops throughout the world. Explore their website at <http://www.uso.org/> for ideas about sending care packages, running a book drive to help soldier parents read books to their children, and many other ideas.

**Support the Israeli Defense Force (IDF)** The men and women serving in the Israeli Defense Force are not volunteers. They are required to join the IDF immediately following completion of high school. The years these young people serve in the military protecting Israel and offering humanitarian relief around the world are a mitzvah, a gift of repairing the world for all of us. How can we help and support them in the good work they do? Here are two websites that may be of assistance to you in finding ways to support the IDF: A Package from Home <http://www.apackagefromhome.org/>; Friends of the Israel Defense Forces <http://www.fidf.org/>



**Do Your Research** Research additional ways to send appropriate materials to your local firefighters and law enforcement as well as our troops overseas and elsewhere. Share what you have found with your friends and family. Make a plan for what you are going to send, to whom, and how often. Here are some questions you will need to answer:

- What supplies will you send and to whom?
- Where are you going to obtain the supplies you are sending?
- How will you be sending the supplies?
- How often do you want to send them?
- Where will you store the supplies between shipments?

## MY HERO!

Ari Fish is an avid collector of soccer sports cards. In fact, his desire to own a Wayne Timcoe card is what gets him in so much trouble with his friends. Everyone—young and old—wants to have a hero in their life, and seeing your hero's picture on a trading card is a really big deal. Think of the people who are heroes in your life. They do not have to be famous. Remember what Ari's rabbi said, "I think we need to remember that heroes are real people, too." Complete the My #1 Hero worksheet (guide page 7). Use the information from the worksheet to make a trading card that features your hero.

## JEWIS IN SPORTS

Did you know that there are many Jewish sports heroes? In fact there is an International Jewish Sports Hall of Fame located in Netanya, Israel. Visit their website for more information: <http://www.jewishsports.net/index.html> Learn more about Jews and Sports at this link: [http://www.myjewishlearning.com/culture/2/Sports/Sports\\_and\\_Judaism.shtml](http://www.myjewishlearning.com/culture/2/Sports/Sports_and_Judaism.shtml) Perhaps you want to begin your own collection of sports cards featuring Jewish sports heroes. Who would be on your list?



**Sarah Aronson** holds an MFA in Writing for Children and Young Adults from Vermont College of Fine Arts. **BEYOND LUCKY** is her second book for young readers. Her first young adult novel, *Head Case* (Roaring Brook Press, 2007), was named an ALA Quick Pick for Reluctant Readers. When she's not writing or teaching writing courses, Sarah enjoys watching sports, riding her bike, cooking spicy food, and drinking good coffee. Like Ari Fish, she is a little bit superstitious. Sarah lives with her family in Hanover, New Hampshire. For more information about her life and work, visit her website: [www.saraharonson.com](http://www.saraharonson.com).

The activities in this guide were created by **Kathy Bloomfield**, founder and president of forwordsbooks, a national Jewish book fair and catalog sales business, founding book club editor of BabagaNewz Magazine, and a past member of the Association of Jewish Libraries' Sydney Taylor Book Award committee. Kathy has always had a passion for children's literature, especially Jewish children's literature and secular books with Jewish values content. She currently works as an elementary school instructional library assistant, writes a book column for the Combined Jewish Philanthropies' Family Connections newsletter, and reviews books and writes at her website [www.forwordsbooks.com](http://www.forwordsbooks.com). She lives in Wellesley, Massachusetts.

# MY #1 HERO

Full name: \_\_\_\_\_

Nickname: \_\_\_\_\_

Group/Team/Squad/Crew/Company: \_\_\_\_\_

Position/Job/Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Number (if on a team): \_\_\_\_\_

Home (city and state): \_\_\_\_\_

Date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Why is this person your hero?: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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What makes this person unique, one-of-a-kind, irreplaceable? \_\_\_\_\_

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