

Leah Larson:

Editor-in-Chief



BY YAFFA KLUGERMAN

When she couldn't find a magazine for Jewish girls, Leah created her own.

Leah Larson sits at the computer in her bedroom, checking her e-mail for new subscription orders, feedback from readers, and ad requests from companies. Later, she'll consult with her editorial board about article ideas, dream up a cover concept, and review an article about a Jewish girl from New Zealand. But before any of this is done, of course, Leah will have to complete her homework.

It's all in a day's work for 14-year-old Leah Larson from Sharon, Massachusetts, the editor and publisher of *Yaldah*, a magazine for Jewish girls, written by Jewish girls. Tired of magazines that centered on fashion, celebrities, and boyfriends,

Leah hit upon the idea of creating a publication for her peers that talked about Jewish values. Leah believed that her magazine, whose name means "girl" in Hebrew, would help observant kids who were confronted with popular opinions that didn't necessarily mesh with their own viewpoints. "When you see things that don't support your values," explains Leah, "it can be hard."

Leah, whose stories had previously appeared in magazines such as *American Girl* and *New Moon*, set to work creating her new publication. Working from her home, Leah formed an editorial board and raised money through



donations and advertising. Ten months later, the first issue of *Yaldah* went to press with 150 copies—and sold out within two months. After four issues, *Yaldah* now boasts 250 subscribers from all over the United States and abroad. Included in its pages are puzzles, recipes, fiction, book reviews, and interviews. You can also read about ideas for tzedakah projects, and directions for a kosher Bazooka bubble gum costume for Purim.

Leah takes her commitment to *Yaldah* seriously: She somehow manages to juggle schoolwork and extra-curricular activities with intense hours of writing and editing her magazine. But she also takes care to check her facts, and makes absolutely sure that everything she publishes is accurate.

"When you're reporting something," she notes, "you want to give people the right facts. That's just ethical. When people read something they trust, they should know that everything in there is correct."

Eventually, Leah hopes that *Yaldah* will build a network of Jewish girls who want to share their stories, artwork, and creativity. But for now, she's just happy to be producing a very unique type of magazine. "I think," she remarks, "that it's good for everyone to have a fun magazine to read." 🍷

JEWISHFUL THINKING

Journalists like Leah know it better than anyone: Check the facts carefully, because it's very easy to mix up the truth. The Hebrew words for "truth" and "falsehood" hint to the same point. If you look carefully at אמת (*emet*, truth), you'll notice that the letters of the word consist of the first, middle, and last letters in the *alef-bet*. The word שקר (*sheker*, falsehood) also contains three letters: *shin*, *kuf*, and *reish*—letters that are slightly mixed up from their correct order in the *alef-bet*.

What can we learn from the arrangement of these letters? Factual statements contain truth, from beginning to end, while lies contain a little bit of truth that's all mixed up.

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meet
Leah

