

Oy Vey and Excelsior! Jewish Representation and Moral Lessons in Graphic Novels and Comics

Eli Lieberman

Description: This presentation will focus on graphic novels and comic books with characters who are identifiably Jewish. Mr. Lieberman will discuss how Haredi and other such groups utilize comic books and graphic novels to impart religious and moral lessons, as well as providing an alternative to secular comic books and culture. With the recent passing of Stan Lee, co-creator of many of the most well-known superheroes and superhero teams for Marvel Comics, there has been an increased focus on the history and use of graphic novels and comics in the general culture. Examples of Jewish characters in these materials include Shaloman by Al Weisner, as well as characters from the Marvel Comics universe who have markedly Jewish identities, such as Ben Grimm aka The Thing, Kitty Pryde aka Shadowcat, Magneto, and others. The benefits of collecting this genre, especially for adolescents, in Jewish school libraries will also be discussed.

Eli Lieberman is Judaica librarian at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in New York. In addition to his MLS, he holds a master's in religious studies from New York University. He has been following the history and development of graphic novels and comic books as an academic interest for several years.