

Tzvi Novick
University of Notre Dame

Charity and the Scapegoat: On Structures of Exchange in Some Rabbinic Texts

The act of charity arguably has the effect of transforming the poor into an Other, an object that is acted upon. Unlike various reciprocal exchanges, where every party both receives and gives, the charity exchange rigidly distinguishes givers and receivers. From this perspective, charity can, paradoxically, be understood in Girardian terms as a kind of scapegoating gesture, a means of constituting a society of givers by excluding the receivers. I consider two contexts in classical rabbinic literature where this aspect of charity appears to come to the fore.