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Women, Food and Ritual in Biblical Israel and Judah

Sunday, February 19, 2017  
3:00pm  
Carlos Museum, Level Three  
Emory University

The writers of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament condemned certain religious practices that took place outside of the Jerusalem Temple and/or were performed in the worship of deities other than Yahweh. For example, Jeremiah (7:18 and 44:17-25) rails against women making cakes for the Queen of Heaven in a ritual that involved the whole family, and women are described weaving garments for Asherah in the Jerusalem Temple in 2 Kings 23:7 and weeping for Tammuz in Ezekiel 8:14. Although we have no extra-biblical evidence for the actual activities that took place in the Jerusalem Temple, more than one hundred temples, shrines, and other cultic spaces have been found at Iron Age (ca. 1200-586 BCE) sites in Israel and nearly all of them contain evidence for preparing and/or consuming food and drink. Since women are believed to have been the primary cooks and bakers in biblical times, it is likely that they prepared food offerings for the deities worshipped throughout Israel and Judah. In this presentation, we will discuss the biblical and archaeological evidence for food and drink offerings to Yahweh and other deities suggesting that Israelite women were responsible for feeding the gods as well as their families.

The lecture is sponsored by:  
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The event is free and open to the public.