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“To Be or Not to Be?”: The Emergence of the Israelites and the Formation of their Identity

Sunday, March 3, 2013
3:00pm
Michael C. Carlos Museum, Reception Hall
Emory University

The time of Israel's emergence in Canaan and the processes which gave rise to this ethnic entity are among the thorniest problems in biblical archaeology. The question has, consequently, received much scholarly attention, and the topic also has its share of public interest. Views on those questions vary greatly, with some scholars questioning the mere existence of ancient Israel. The lecture will scrutinize the archaeological evidence in order to learn about the timing and processes that accompanied Israel's ethnogenesis. Notably, Israel's ethnogenesis was a long process in which this group interacted with other groups – mainly the Philistines, their “arch-enemies” – and self-identified itself vis-à-vis them. The lecture will discuss the changing nature of the relations between the different groups that existed in Canaan at the time - Israelites, Canaanites and Philistines – how they used and manipulated various symbols of identity, and what were the various mechanisms of boundary maintenance that were operating during this formative period.

The lecture is sponsored by the Program in Mediterranean Archaeology, the Department of Middle Eastern and South Asian Studies, and the Michael C. Carlos Museum. The event is free and open to the public.