

# ANCIENT URBANISM IN THE SOUTHERN LEVANT

Lecture by

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**12<sup>th</sup> May 2026**

**16:15**

**Room 0.2052**

**Freie Universität Berlin  
Fabeckstr. 23/25, 14195 Berlin**

Eine Veranstaltung der BerGSAS im Rahmen des  
**Forschungskolloquiums im SoSe 2026**  
Institut für Vorderasiatische Archäologie  
Institut für Altorientalistik

The lecture will re-evaluate the concept of the “city” in the Southern Levant from the Middle Bronze Age to the early Iron Age, questioning whether these settlements constitute fully developed urban centers. Moving beyond Mesopotamian models, it adopts a comparative, processual framework that foregrounds diverse trajectories of social complexity.

Two socio-political formations are distinguished. The first comprises small fortified centers of the Late Bronze and early Iron Age that continued Middle Bronze Age traditions and functioned as capitals of patrimonial city-states. Despite their urban appearance, their limited scale suggests forms of “secondary urbanism.” The second formation developed in the highlands, where kinship-based village networks coalesced into fortified “village-towns” of c. 500–1000 inhabitants, characterized by limited specialization and corporate lineage-based organization.

The analysis suggests that many “Israelite cities” were complex rural communities, pointing to alternative pathways to urbanism.

**The lecture is open to all**