



Ancient Settlement Fluctuations and Environmental Changes in Israel's Coastal Plain

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Previous studies suggested that arid conditions in the ancient Near-East altered settlement pattern and even triggered the collapse of empires; more humid conditions in the semi-arid Near-East are expected to be more favorite for living. Here we present archaeological evidence for a drastic decline in settlement along the Israeli coast during most of the fifth millennium BP (Early Bronze Age II-III). Based on archaeological and climatic evidence we link this decline to an environment change at that time. We propose that increased precipitation intensified the already existing drainage problems and resulted with flooding, which lead to transformation of arable land into marshes and to spread of diseases, gradually causing settlement decline and abandonment.