

The Faculty of Biotechnology and Food Engineering

Seminar

Prof. Liran Carmel

The genetic history of the Canaanites

The Hebrew University

Abstract

The emerging field of ancient DNA allows glimpses into the genetics of individuals that are long-dead, and revolutionizes our ability to probe into the human past. In particular, it provides new means to tackle long-standing historical questions. In this talk, I will show the genetic analysis of dozens of samples collected from a number of archaeological sites in Israel and the surroundings, all presenting the “Canaanite” material culture. I will reveal their genetic origins, showing that they are a mixture of local people, and populations arriving from the northeast over extended periods of time throughout the Bronze Age. Whereas Canaanites were spread in different city-states, we show that they are genetically similar. This population, therefore, is an example of a case where shared genetic ancestry is associated with shared culture. We examined present-day populations related to the Levant, and found that many of them have substantial ancestry coming from populations related to the Bronze Age Southern Levant and the northeast. These groups also harbor ancestry from sources we cannot fully model with the available data, highlighting the critical role of post-Bronze Age migrations into the region over the past 3000 years.

Wednesday, 24/6/2020, 14:00 – 15:00

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