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UNDERSTANDING THE SUCCESS AND SPREAD OF MODERN HUMANS AFTER 50,000 YEARS AGO: PERSPECTIVES FROM THE SOUTHERN LEVANT

As recently as 50,000 years ago, there were at least four human species present on the landscape, but today, we stand alone. What accounts for the success and spread of our species after 50,000 years ago? Many archaeologists believe it was due to series of key behavioral shifts that conferred particular adaptive advantages—in other words, it was the evolution of “modern” behavior/culture that allowed us to out-compete archaic populations such as the Neanderthals. And yet, prior to 35,000 years ago, several of these behaviors see only patchy expression across time and space. Furthermore, a growing body of data indicates that late Neanderthal populations were themselves capable of significant behavioral complexity. Where does this leave us? In this talk, I’ll provide a brief overview of research on the topic, followed by a discussion of my ongoing research on human behavioral evolution in the Southern Levant, where I am involved in two projects: one at the Early Upper Paleolithic site of Mughr el-Hamamah (Jordan) and one at the Upper and Epipaleolithic site of Sefunim Cave (Israel).

**ANTHROPOLOGY
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