

European Jews closely related and not converted Khazars

If you're European Jewish and meet another European member of the community, odds are you're at least 30th cousins.

A study by an international team suggests the central and eastern European Jewish population, known as [Ashkenazi Jews](#), from whom most American Jews are descended, started from a founding population of about 350 people between 600 and 800 years ago.

Further, that group of Jews who experienced this "bottleneck" was of approximately evenly mixed Middle Eastern and European descent.

The findings bolster the mainstream view that the ancestors of European Jews were people from the Levant and local Europeans. An earlier, 19th-century theory posited that the core of [the Ashkenazi Jewish population](#) is descended from Khazars, from the Russian steppes, but the genetic evidence makes that even less likely, said study researcher Itsik Pe'er, an associate professor of computer science and systems biology at Columbia University.

The team analyzed the genomes of 128 Ashkenazi Jews, comparing them with a reference group of 26 Flemish people from Belgium. From that the researchers were able to work out which genetic markers in the genome are unique to Ashkenazi. The number of similarities within the genomes allowed the scientists to compute a rough estimate of the founding population and put upper and lower limits on the amount of time that had passed since that group originated. In this case it is 30 to 32 generations, or at most 800 years. "[Among Ashkenazi Jews] everyone is a 30th cousin," Pe'er said. "They have a stretch of the genome that is identical."

Read the full, original story: [Oy Vey! European Jews are all 30th cousins, study finds](#)