

RJ Hall

Subject: FW: TeHEP UPDATE 6 JANUARY 2010

Tall el-Hammam Excavation Project

Trinity Southwest University,
Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA

in a Joint Scientific Project with the

Department of Antiquities,
The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

TeHEP UPDATE

6 January 2010

An Exclusive Report for TeHEP Alumni, Financial Supporters, and Friends

[GLOSSARY OF CHRONOLOGICAL TERMS FREQUENTLY USED IN TeHEP UPDATES:

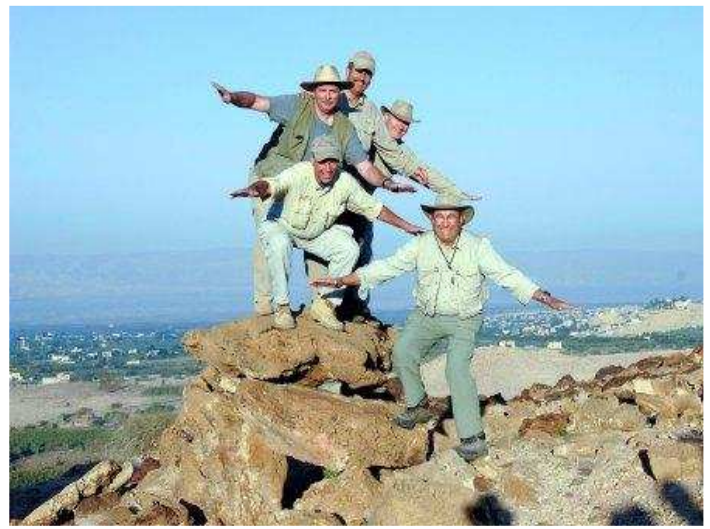
Chalcolithic Period = Copper/Stone Age, 4400-3300 BCE; EBA = Early Bronze Age, 3300-2350 BCE; IBA = Intermediate Bronze Age, 2350-2000 BCE; MBA = Middle Bronze Age, 2000-1550 BCE; LBA = Late Bronze Age, 1550-1200 BCE; IA1 = Iron Age 1, 1200-1000 BCE; IA2 = Iron Age 2, 1000-586 BCE; IA3 = Iron Age 3/Persian Period, 586-332 BCE; HP = Hellenistic/Greek Period, 332-63 BCE; ERP = Early Roman Period, 63 BCE-168 CE]

Hello All:

A few days ago while dolmen hunting in the hills just east of Tall el-Hammam, we found one that had a great vantage point from which to view our dig site and the Kikkar of the Jordan beyond. In these photos it's pretty amazing what you can see besides members of the dig team posing on the dolmen. In the background just left of the dolmen you can see lower Hammam; to the right, upper Hammam. Just beyond Upper Hammam (looking like a very small hill) is Tall Kafrayn (Gomorra). At the foot of the distant Judean hills lies Jericho. To the left on the horizon is east Jerusalem; to the right is the area of Bethel and Ai. Tall el-Hammam, known in Joseph's day as Abel of the Egyptians and in the time of Moses as Abel-Shittim, also sits just a few kilometers from Bethel beyond the Jordan, the place of Jesus' baptism, which in the photo is just about on the right "green line" on the edge of the river channel. So this isn't just your average photo-op! Very special, indeed.

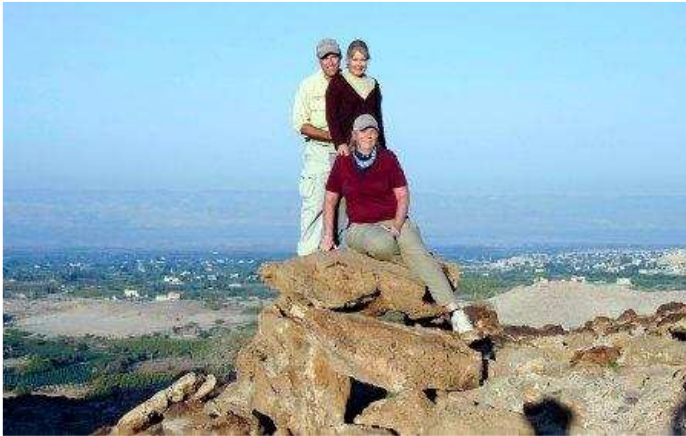


DR. MC RECORDING A DOLMEN

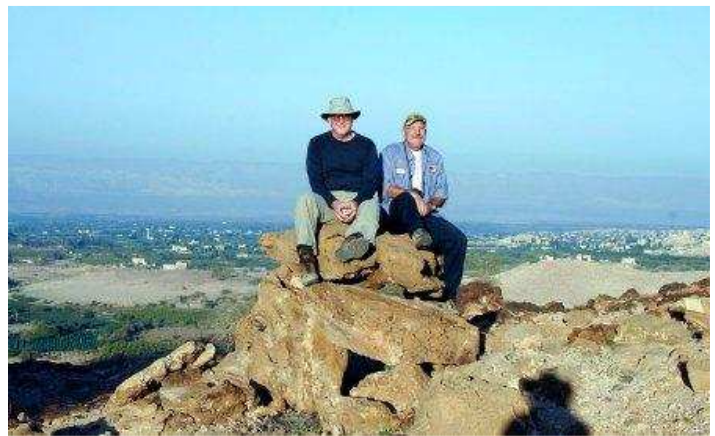


HUSSIEN, STEVE MC, KEN, GARY, AND MIKE DOLMEN SURFING

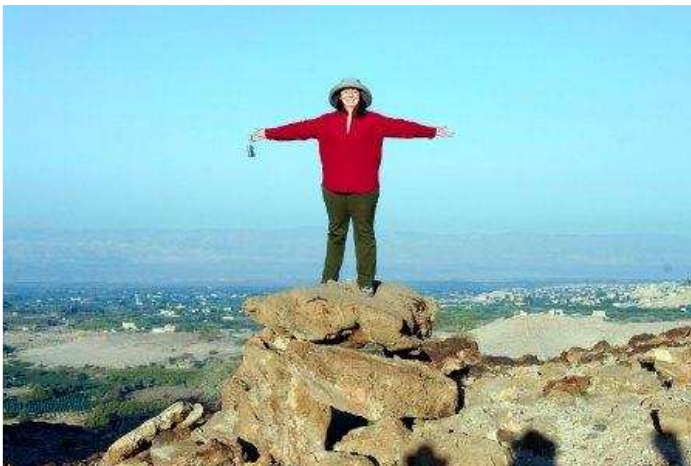
More than one person has emailed asking for an explanation of what dolmens are and when they were built and used, so here goes. I'll try to be brief. Let me start by saying that about 99% of what we know about dolmens is speculation. Some of that may be educated speculation, but speculation nonetheless. The 1% we know for sure is this: They don't occur naturally, they were built by humans in ancient times, they mostly exist in or adjacent to the Rift (Jordan) Valley, and they're only built where appropriate stone materials are immediately available.



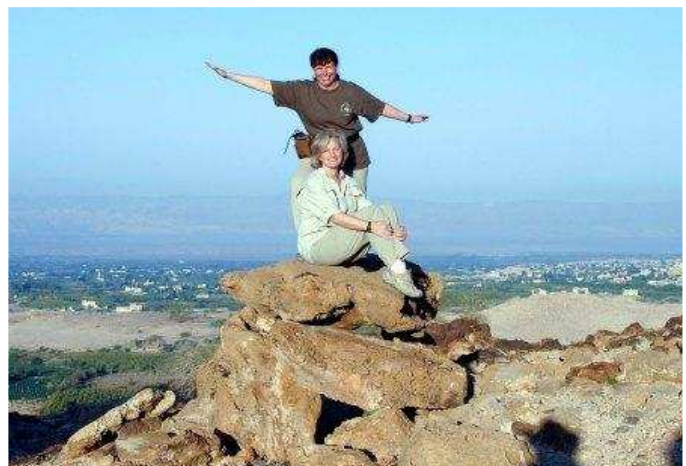
GARY, GAYLE, AND JOANN



HAL AND JAKE



IRINA FROM MOSCOW



SHERESA AND CARROLL

Now for the rest. Some scholars date them to the Neolithic Period. Some date them to the Chalcolithic Period. Most date them to Early Bronze Age. Many believe that they were used through the Intermediate Bronze Age and Middle Bronze Age, and perhaps all the way through the Iron Age. But I say, why not all of the above? They were likely focal points for funerary and/or religious rites. Perhaps a single dolmen represented a family, and a cluster a clan. Stone circles associated with dolmens may have served some ritual function. Standing monoliths are also found in dolmen areas, and they, too, must have had some sort of ritual/religious purpose. Overall, burials are not common in/under the dolmens themselves. Were they monuments or some sort of sacred platform? Nobody knows. Cave and rock-cut tombs are usually present in adjacent valleys, and dolmens tend to be located up higher on the flatter areas, but not always. This may represent a direct relationship between dolmens and tombs. Tombs rarely contain complete skeletons, and mostly house the large and long bones like skulls, leg and arm bones. This suggests to me that dolmen tops may have been used as platforms for the desiccation of bodies by exposing them to the natural elements and scavenging birds. When the 'job' was finished in a week or two, the remaining large bones were ritually interred in the family tomb not far away. Dolmen size, clustering, and type may say something about the structure of the ancient societies that used them. But there's no doubt that they were an important part of the fabric of ancient life, and were an ever-present part of the cultural landscape around Tall el-Hammam. I'm fairly certain that there were specific ritual practices associated with dolmens, monoliths, stone circles, and tombs. But that's it in a nutshell.



WOODLAND, CA FOLKS: ABIGAIL, ROCHELLE, KAREN, ANNA, AND CARL



ANCIENT STONE CIRCLE

We so need your prayers and continued financial support. God's blessings be upon you all.

Digging the Bible,

Steven Collins, TeHEP Director
Dean, College of Archaeology, Trinity Southwest University

P.S. Please forward this to whomever you like!

You can make donations to TeHEP at the TSU shopping website: www.shop.tsu-

edu.us.

Donations can be mailed to: TSU; 5600 Eubank NE, Suite 130; Albuquerque, NM USA 87111.

For detailed information about the Tall el-Hammam Excavation Project, visit the official TeHEP website: www.tallelhammam.com.