

DID BIBLICAL GIANTS BUILD THE CIRCLE OF THE REFAIM?



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One of the last great barely known wonders of the ancient world is a Stonehenge-like monument sitting atop Israel's Golan Heights. Called Gilgal Refaim (The Circle Of The Refaim) in Hebrew, the monument consists of five concentric stone rings whose diameter is 155 meters.

The best preserved of the rings is the outermost, whose height reaches 2 meters and thickness 3.3 meters. Some of the stones used to create the ring weigh twenty tons. The total weight of the stones is 37,000 tons.

In the middle of the rings is a cairn, topped by a tumulus, measuring twenty meters across.

Despite the obvious attraction to archaeologists, the rings remained hidden while the suspicious Syrian regimes held the Golan Heights and were only opened to inspection after Israel won the area in the Six Day War of 1967.

One feature of the rings has particularly fascinated the few people who have studied them. It is the meaning of two large openings, somewhat like doorways, one facing northeast, the other southeast.

In 1968 Professor Yonathan Mizrahi of the Department of Anthropology at Harvard University and Prof. Anthony Aveni of Colgate University discovered that in 3000 BCE, the first rays of the summer solstice would have appeared directly through the northeast opening as seen from the central tumulus. At the same time, the southeast opening provided a direct view of Sirius.

One function of the circles then, was an astronomical observatory and stellar calendar. Or was it?

Prof. Mizrahi is doubtful. "Why would they have undertaken such a massive building project, collecting 37,000 tons of stone and painstakingly laying them down to last forever, when the same task could have been completed using one rock and a stick?"

In fact, no one knows why the site was built -- thus speculation is rife. Micah Ankouri, for instance, writing in *Teva Ve'aretz* (Land and Nature) spends five pages trying to provide a connection between the circles and Far Eastern mandalas. He concludes that Gilgal Refaim was an "astronomical observatory providing social harmony through its communal construction and proof of the perfection of the universe."

The astronomical dating confirms lichenometric tests and carbon dating of potsherds found on the site. In fact, the professors erred on the side of conservatism. The shards dated to the Early Bronze Age, 3rd millennium BCE, 5000 years ago. A three layered burial monument was added to the central cairn a thousand years later. Thus, the circles pre-date the pyramids and Babylonian temples, making them the oldest astronomical complex in the Middle East.

The mysteries continue. Gilgal Refaim is the only megalithic astronomical complex on earth built of loose stones. It resembles more ruins found on Malta and in Zimbabwe than European sites built at the same time and possibly for the same purpose.

But despite the similarity of purpose, supposedly the simple nomads of the region had no contact with Europe. Nor were the shepherd tribes prone to massive building projects. Gilgal Refaim was the only such undertaking in the Middle East at the time. There was no apparent cultural reason for this unique engineering project.

For those seeking a possible UFO connection: the circles were built on a flat plateau. No one could have seen the shape of the monument from ground level and there were no hills nearby to gaze upon it. Yet the monument could only have been appreciated from above. It was as likely a message to the stars as a stellar observatory.

In the general region of the rings are hundreds of dolmens, similar in appearance to those found in northern Britain and France. Moshe Hartal, Chief Archaeologist of the Golan explains, "We have identified 8,500 dolmens of twenty separate styles on the Golan Heights. Each tribe had its own dolmen style. The biggest dolmen stones weigh over 50 tons and are seven meters in height. Graves are found within some domens but not all. Their function was not purely funereal."

If the dolmens surrounding Gilgal Refaim were an integral part of the site, then it was an enormous project encompassing more area than at the Giza pyramids. Hartal is reluctant to draw such a conclusion, taking the more conservative view that the dolmens were built over time around the attraction of the circles.



One fact stands out. The local nomadic tribes of the time did not build any other remotely similar monument. Circle building was not a fashion of the era among the herdsmen and that, combined with their unsuitable, primitive technology, seems to rule out their construction of the circles.

If the local inhabitants didn't build the rings, then who did? Surprisingly, there is strong evidence that the biblical giants or Refaim were the architects and engineers who constructed the monument.

Consider the following biblical clues, written in modern terminology (The Book, Tyndale House Publishers):

-- In Genesis 14:5, we are told the Refaim inhabit the place called Ashtherot-Karnaim. Just ten miles from the rings is the site of an ancient Canaanite city called Ashtarot. It is named after the Canaanite goddess of war and, contradictorily, love. Ashtherot was the Canaanite name for Sirius, from which the Hebrew name Esther was derived.

-- In Joshua 12:4, we learn that "King Og of Bashan, the last of the Refaim, who lived at Ashtherot ... ruled a territory stretching From Mount Hermon in the north...

-- In 1 Chronicles 6:71, we are told that the half-tribe of Manasseh later inhabited "Golan," in Bashan.

-- The most explicit description of the size of the people of Bashan is found in Deuteronomy 3. King Og is attacked and defeated. "King Og of Bashan was the last of the great Refaim. His iron bedstead is kept at Rabbah... and measures thirteen and a half feet long and six feet wide." In the same chapter we are informed that "The Sidonians called Mount Hermon, 'Sirion.'"

-- In Deuteronomy, we are told that the Refaim "were a large and powerful tribe, as tall as the Anakim (giants)."

-- In Chronicles 20, the last of the Anakim is killed. "A giant with six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot, whose father was also a giant,... was killed by David's nephew Jonathan. These giants were descendants of the giants of Gath and were killed by David and his soldiers."

The respected Jerusalem biblical author, Rabbi Yisrael Herczeg, hardly an advocate of ancient alien theories, nonetheless confirms the possibility that giant heavenly beings or their descendants could have constructed the circles.

"The Jewish oral tradition says Og, the King of Bashan, stowed away on Noah's ark and was the only survivor of the flood outside Noah's family. Og was descended from the Nefilim, deities who fell from the heavens."

Aliens?

"No, more like fallen angels. Og had children with Noah's daughters and they were hybrid giants called the Anakim or Refaim. They existed in ancient times and the Bible records their presence in the Golan Heights. They could have built Gilgal Refaim."