

HEROD'S AMPHITHEATRE.

JERUSALEM.

JOSEPHUS, in "Antiq.," xv, 8, §1, says: "Herod built a theatre at Jerusalem, as also a very great amphitheatre, in the plain (outside town), both very costly works." Hitherto neither of them has yet been found or discovered, and the finding of their sites is a problem up till now.

Some years ago it happened to me, when standing on the high heap of rubbish overtopping the town wall (inside of it, and north of "Burj Kibryt") east of "Bab en Nebi Daud," looking southwards into the now green and lovely country, I observed on a hill side an encircled hollow, which seemed to me to be artificial; a few Siloam fellaheen were standing near, with whom I had settled some business (a bargain for removing earth and bringing certain kinds of stones), I asked them if they could see such and such a place, pointing it out to them, and, when found, if they could tell me the proprietor of the ground. "Could you find it, when we go there?" I asked, and they said, "Yes." "Well, then, let us go there together and see what we may find," was my reply. We went out by the Maghrabeen gate, and down to the pool of Siloam and Bir Eyúb, and then up south-westwards to the top of the hill, and after some search we found the place. At once I saw that the cavity is artificial, and thought that perhaps it was Herod's Amphitheatre! But to prove this assertion excavations were necessary. I mentioned this find to several persons, especially to Dr. Chaplin, verbally, and by writing to Prof. Guthe, at Leipzig (in Germany), the Secretary of the German Palestine Exploration Society, but not telling the latter the *situation*; instead of giving me orders to excavate, he said in his answer: He had also found the site when making his excavations at Siloam, a few years before, and found it strange that I had in my letter not mentioned the exact *site*, as he knows it is a little south of Burj Kibryt. As this is not the case, I understood he wished only to preserve for himself the priority, and as he did not beg me to do anything, I did nothing more in the matter. Dr. and Professor Euting, of Strasburg, also visited Jerusalem, and my son-in-law was travelling for a short time with him, so he told Euting of my find, and guided him to the spot; he picked up the same idea of having been a theatre, but said that excavations ought to be made, and when done, he would be glad to hear of its result, but gave no order to do it on his account, and so my son-in-law tried to do something, and had an idea to purchase the ground, but his endeavours led to no result. He got the proprietor to dig in some places (in the arena), in hopes of finding the pavement of the arena, but without any success. I paid him his outlay, hoping that the time will come when I shall be able to recover my expenses. So for some years nothing was done till recently, when the English Exploration Fund sent me some money in order to enable me to undertake excava-

tions, &c., when opportunity should arrive. So I determined at once to look a little more seriously into the "Theatre." I have now made the necessary measurements and some excavations, so that I am able to make a plan and sections of the whole, which are here inclosed, and to which I add a few words of explanation.

No. 1. Is a map or plan, showing the situation or site of the amphitheatre, and several other places. It is on a double-size scale of the large map.

No. 2. A plan of the Amphitheatre.

No. 3. Elevation and sections from north to south of the middle and western part, according to the lines A, B and E, F of plan.

No. 4. Elevation and sections from north to south, middle and eastern part, according to the lines in Plan A, B, H, M, K, G, and M, I, L.

No. 5. Elevation and sections from east to west, according to the lines C, D in plan.

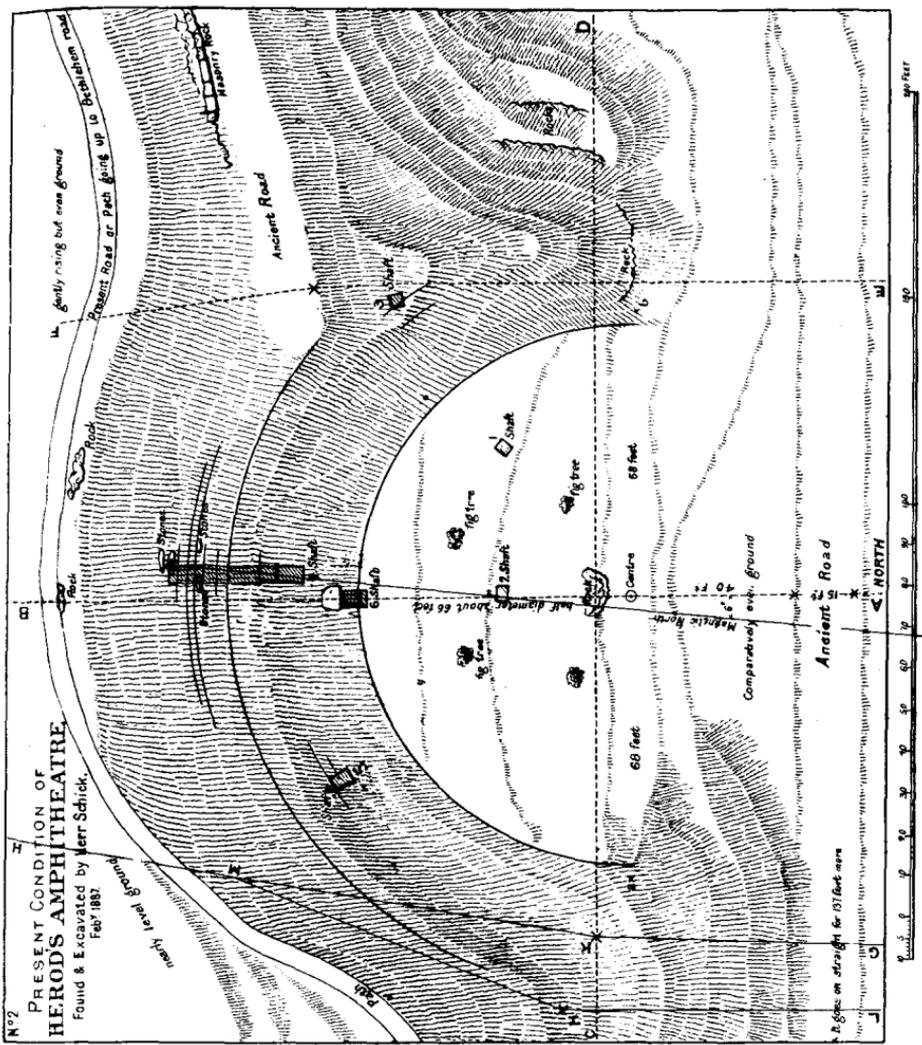
No. 6. Plan, sections, side views, &c., of details found in the neighbourhood.

This theatre (as will be seen on the Map No. 1) is situated on the northern and steep slope of a hill, between the two valleys, "Wady Yasul" on the south, and "Wady es Shama" on the north, both going eastwards and falling into the Kedron Valley or "Wady en Nar." This hill is called "Er Ras," and is higher than the spur of the Abu Thor mountain, falling eastwards down to the Kedron, on which the necropolis is found together with Aeldama. So one could not only on the top of "er Ras," but even on the whole slope where the theatre is situated, see away over it and the whole city. On any former seat of it, one could see the top of the Evil Council Hill (Abu Thor), the present windmill, the Protestant Cemetery, Nebi Daud, and the town wall as far as the south-east corner of the Haram, and all that is now outside, with the depression of the Tyropeon, the Pool of Siloam, the Ophel, Kedron Valley up to Gethsemane, the village of Siloam, the Mount of Offence, and top of Mount Olivet. So that the spectators in the theatre had, at any rate, at the same time a very nice view before them.

The hill consists to the greater part of very soft limestone, in which the amphitheatre is carved, and what was wanted besides it had to be built by stones, which when existing in greater extent were afterwards again removed, and small traces of it may now be found.

The layer of earth covering the rock is not very thick, shafts for examination of the rock were made; in the rock the seats are, as a kind of steps, still recognisable, although in the course of centuries very much worn and decayed.

The slope to the horizontal line is still easily to be measured, and makes on all three sides, west, south, and east, 37 degrees. This observation, and that the roundness is exactly a half circle, convinced me fully that we have here Herod's Amphitheatre. I hoped to find the flooring of the arena, but it is destroyed, and I have found nothing of it, as the ground was always cultivated and trees planted, but not so on the

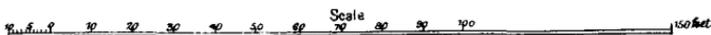
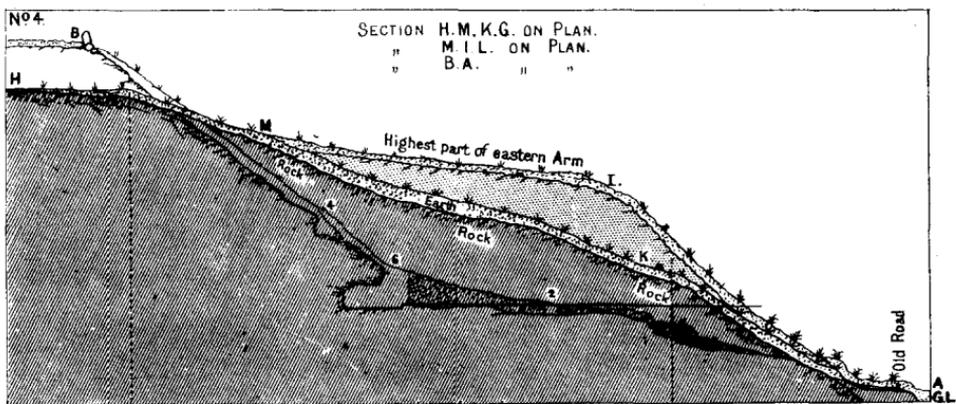
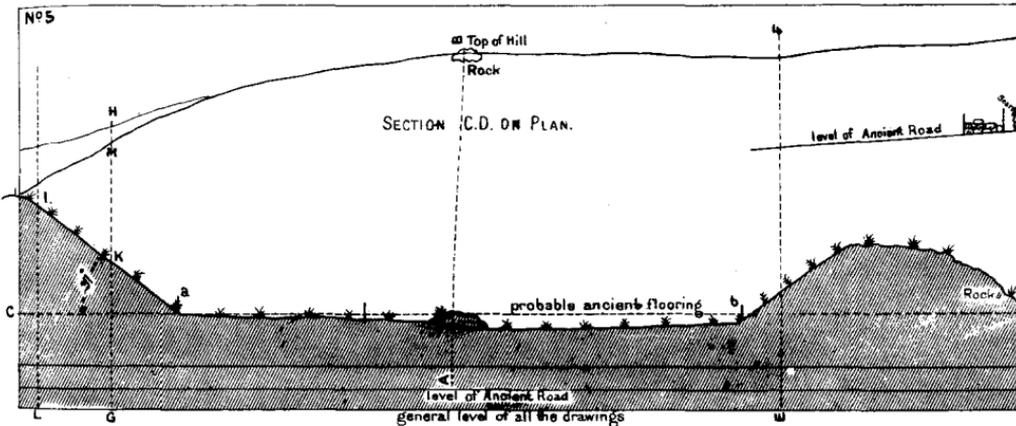
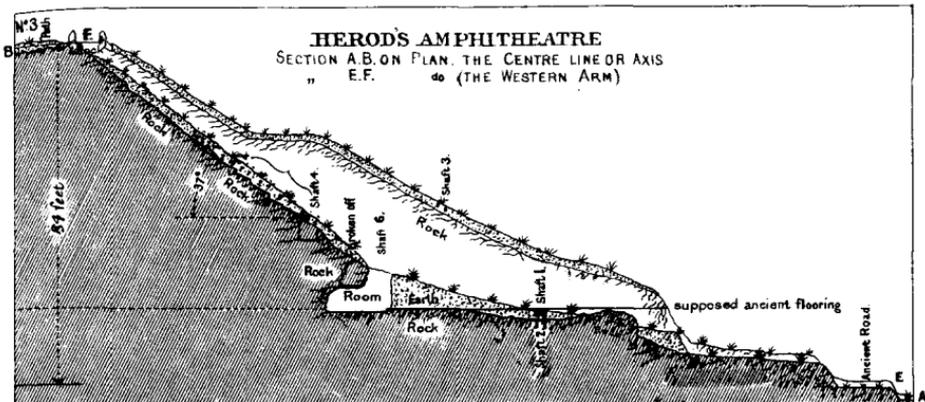


**PRESENT CONDITION OF
HERODS AMPHITHEATRE**

Found & Excavated by **Jerr Schrick**
Feb'y 1887

Scale on straight for 131 feet seen

100 Feet



slopes, being too steep. It may be that the flooring of the arena was not paved with stones, perhaps simply a concrete, or a similar flooring, more fit for the games, and hence no traces can be found of it. Also its real altitude cannot exactly be fixed, but it must have been a little higher than the top of the rock, cropping out from the ground in the middle of the arena, nearly the centre of the circle, which is a little north of it (as seen in the drawings). North of it the ground is falling in two steps to a distance of 40 feet from this deepest point, to the highest, on the top or brow of the hill, I measured the height to 84 feet (see No. 3).

The bearing of the axis is toward *north*, 6 degrees west, on the line of the northern face of the theatre (the full diameter) 264 degrees, very nearly the same as the theatre Akud (265 degrees) at Scythopolis.

Before I speak of the measurements I will say a few words on the shafts I made.

Shafts 1 and 2 were made to find the flooring of the arena ; but except the rock, nothing was found.

Shaft 3, after a few feet, rock was struck, and traces of steps found in a line with the circle.

Shaft 4 was rather a trench 26 feet long, and the rocks for that length were laid bare. Here the traces of former steps were distinctly visible, and in an exact straight line of 37 degrees to the horizon. At the lower end (of the trench) was a kind of cavity with an even flooring, and about 5 feet wide, on the upper side, also about 5 feet high. From this (upper) edge the slope upwards for 9 feet 7 inches is a smooth rock, without observing traces of former steps, but after 9 feet 7 inches were steps measuring in the slanting or slope line, 2 feet 7 inches, 2 feet 7 inches, 1 foot 9½ inches, 2 feet 1¼ inches, and 2 feet 1¼ inches.

Shaft 5. When at a depth of about 7 feet deep rock was found, and tracings of two steps on it were seen, but nothing else of importance. As I wished to find the lower limit of the steps, and the beginning of the arena—

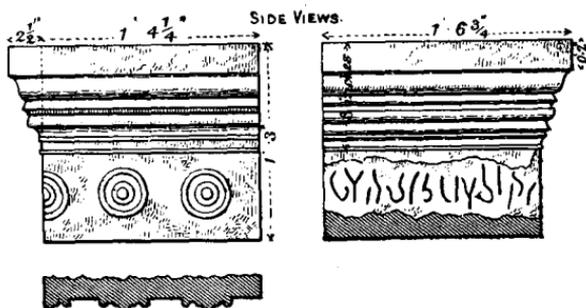
Shaft 6 was made, where at an average depth of about 10 feet, the rock was found as an even, horizontal flooring, with a 5-inch step leading into a cavity or small room with a sloping roof, 6 feet wide by 14 feet long, and in height about 6 feet or more (see Section 3). The rock was so brittle that a few days after, in which a heavy rain had fallen, I found the roof broken and fallen in.

As the proprietor of the ground now raised difficulties and objections to further diggings, in hope of getting a much higher pay than I had promised him at the beginning, and as I thought I had seen enough to prove Herod's Amphitheatre to have been here, the shafts were filled up, and so ended the work.

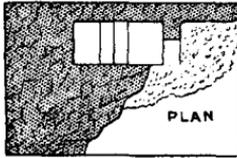
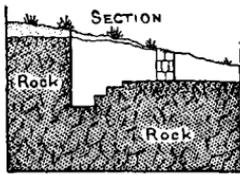
The measurements I made in the following manner :—At *a* and *b* (see Nos. 2 and 5) I placed poles and measured the straight line between, which I found 136 feet long, so the half diameter would be 68 feet, but I have reason to believe it is only 66 feet (this is the measure to the step mentioned in Shaft 6). So the arena would have contained 6,830 square feet.

To the north, although the ground falls in two terraces or steps, it seems to have belonged to the theatre, from the centre point 40 feet wide northwards, where there is a straight strip of land, which certainly has been once a road about 15 feet broad, going eastwards (from the axis of the theatre) 246 feet, ending in east abruptly on the side of the hill at some height up. I could not observe any tracing of its continuity. Steps may have been here leading down to the bottom of the valley, or was this road simply a place for running at the games? I cannot tell. Westwards from the theatre it comes into the bottom of the valley, and there a little higher up a similar road crosses the valley on some higher level, going thence north-eastwards to the brow and top of the northern hill, from which a branch of a road leads down to the widening of the valley near Bir Eyûb, and another branch goes north-westwards over Aceldama and to the road which crosses the Hinnom Valley. I show this with dotted lines on Map No. 1; but have to remark that cultivation of the ground for many centuries has obliterated the greater part, and so the tracing out is made with some difficulty.

Half way, or rather more than half way up, on the western limb of the theatre, comes another road, which can be traced up to the aqueduct and farther on to the Bethlehem road (see No. 1 and No. 2), which is still in use, with the exception of that coming down from the aqueduct. It does not go into the theatre, but girding its upper edge (as seen on No. 2). Here the top of the hill is even, and not very broad; at about 200 feet, the southern slope begins. At about 150 feet south of the upper edge of the theatre the ground was recently dug, and trees planted. Here a number of hewn stones were found. One with fine sculpture, and a



kind of inscription. It is a pity that the fellaheen, in order to make the inscription more visible, have rubbed it out with flintstone, and so, perhaps, some damage was done. These hewn stones prove that once a building had stood here of some importance. Close to this spot is a kind of pit, or small tank, cut into the solid (hard not soft) rock. It is $5\frac{1}{2}$ feet wide, 9 feet deep, in west, and then the flooring goes on in



Scale
0 5 10 Feet

a one or more may have once stood here, and hence the present name of the valley.

The limits of this theatre can now be fixed with some certainty. But I think, as already stated, the diameter of the arena circle was 132 feet, and in proportion, and also the present condition of the ground shows the diameter to the outer boundary lines must have been about 200 feet. In the theatre at Ma-mas (see Vol. II, page 66) the arena has a diameter of 120 feet, and the outer 195 feet. This at Jerusalem was therefore a little larger. At the Akud theatre at Beisan, or Scythopolis, the diameter is 197 feet, and as the Vomitories took $50 + 50 = 100$ feet, the arena diameter, at the most, was 97 feet; hence it was something smaller than that in Jerusalem. It could therefore rival not only those above mentioned, but also the one in Gerasa, and others, if not with the one at Amman, east of the Jordan. The one at Cæsarea (on the sea shore) was even smaller. So Josephus may call this Herod's Amphitheatre, with some right, as "a very great" one. This expression included at the same time the "Theatre" Herod built in the City of Jerusalem itself which must have been much smaller. As we now know the size of the greater one, we may form some opinion as to the size of the theatre in the town, which had an arena of perhaps only 50 feet in diameter. This will be a leading point when searching for its site. There are now two places suggested on which it might have stood: the one suggested by Sir Charles Wilson south of the Aksa, and the other suggested by Prof. Guthe south of the "Burj Kibryt."

In regard to the one outside the town, Josephus has, unfortunately omitted to tell us on which side it is. So that we are free to look for it on all the four sides, but as he uses a word generally translated by "plain," we cannot look for it east of Jerusalem, as there are no plains. On the north there are plains enough, but the spectators sitting in the theatre would not have a fine view before them. The site on which Dr. Riess suggested the theatre might be found, proved to have been the church and convent of St. Stephen. And further, as on the north everywhere

3 steps, and to its eastern wall $10\frac{1}{2}$ feet long. The latter is 2 feet thick, partly now destroyed, and in front of it, is the rock smoothed and even—a little distance off it there is a rock-cut cave.

The top of this hill, called "Er Ras," *i.e.*, the Head. This means not the hill-top—as in that case all hill-tops might be called "Ras," which is not the case, only when they are really the crowning part of something else besides the hill sides. So I think it means here the top or head or crowning part of the theatre. "Wady es Shama," on which southern side it stood, means either valley of the "Wax Candle," or of the pier or pillar—and so in time of old, such

the rock and natural ground is visible, and there is nowhere any trace of a theatre, so it cannot have been on the north side. Towards the west one would look first for it. But hitherto no trace has been found, although the ground became, in the time of my stay here, cultivated, and made into gardens, and houses were built, etc., yet nothing of the kind was found. So we were obliged to look for it on the south side. That no trace of such an important and large building was found, some writers have taken it as a proof that the notice of Josephus is apocryphal—telling more than Herod really did—which is contradicted by my discoveries, and everything in favour of my site, except the words used by Josephus, when it positively means "*plain*," as my site is some distance from the plain (the largest plain in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem) and situated between the hills.

But one must remember that on a hill-side such an amphitheatre was much more easy to be made, and with much less expense than on level ground. Even the expression Amphi-theatre of Josephus seems to indicate this, as generally they were—though not always—but in most cases erected on hill-slopes, at least in all towns where hills were near enough; so I think Herod would follow also in this the Roman custom. And thus may the words used by Josephus, and generally translated "in the plain," have also the meaning—in the field—as we can see it was so in other instances; and when so used, then all things agree.

C. SCHICK.

REMARKS ON HERR SCHICK'S REPORT.

North Aqueduct.—The possibility of this going to Bireh was discussed while I was in Palestine. All the country has been examined frequently, but no traces of aqueduct found. It is a very rocky country, and the channel is pretty certain to have been seen on the surface had it existed. The survey party always looked out for and traced many aqueducts. I believe Mr. Schick's formed view to be correct: that the water was collected from surface channels near Jeremiah's Grotto.

No. 1 and No. 3 Tanks.—I do not understand how Mr. Schick has ascertained that "all is rock," and that the continuation northwards is "untenable." All the visible rock has been examined, but unless the platform has been removed and the wall and houses north of the platform pulled down, it is impossible that any facts can have been discovered to prove this statement. The remarks made do not seem to me sufficient to contradict the known fact that cistern No. 3 is closed on the north by a masonry wall.

Tombs near Golden Gate.—It is quite possible these may be Christian, but they might be Moslem if east and west, or might be burial places of