CHEPHÍRAH OF BENJAMIN.

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(The following interesting description of a little-known Benjamite locality, by our valued correspondent Mr. Masterman, was originally contributed to *Home Words*, a Jerusalem monthly publication.—Ed.)

"CHEPHÍRAH is first mentioned in Joshua ix, 17, as one of the four cities of the Gibeonites; the others were Gibeon (*çl Jib* behind *Nobi Samuel*), Beeroth (generally identified as the present *Birch* on the road to *Nablás*), and Kirjath-Jearim (possibly *Kuriet en 'enab* more commonly called *Abu Ghosh*). It is clear that Chephirah was an important place. It is mentioned again in Josh. xviii, 26, as one of the cities of Benjamin, in association with Mizpeh (supposed to be *Nobi Samuel*) and Mozah (which has been identified by Buhl with *Kulœneh*). The name occurs again in Ezra ii, 25, and Neh. vii, 29, and in the form Caphira in 1 Esdras v, 19; each of these passages refers to the townships represented among the returning Israelites.

"In 1852, the learned Prof. Edward Robinson (*Researches*, Vol. III, p. 146) writes: 'At Yalo, we were told of a ruin in the mountains on the east, said not to be far off, called *Kefir*. It was, however, now too late for us to visit it from Yalo, nor were we able afterwards to make an excursion to it from Jerusalem. But in the name Kefir it is impossible not to recognise the ancient Caphirah, a city of the Gibeonites.... From that day to this it has remained unknown.'

"The merit of discovering the site of Ancient Caphirah thus belongs to Robinson, but, as a matter of fact, the site in question is not Kefir but, which is much more like the old name, *Kefîrah*. The Palestine Exploration Fund survey (*Memoirs*, Vol. III, p. 103) gives the name correctly, but their eight lines of description give but little idea of the interesting position of this ancient site.

"As on Sept. 7th I, quite by chance, found myself there and, as I have found no description of the place, beyond the eight lines mentioned above, I venture here to describe briefly my visit."
"It was in the course of a visit to Kubaibeh that my sight was arrested by the appearance of a lofty hill to the west which, unlike its neighbours, was covered with brush-wood and had a flattened top, clearly artificial. It was manifestly a tell covering an ancient site. At the suggestion of Canon Marriott we made a walk there. We descended the valley to the west of the Franciscan Convent, following the line of an ancient road. About half-way, we reached an ancient spring excavated, like most of them in the district, a long way into the hill-side. Here we left the road and kept along the terraced hill-side gradually ascending among fine old olives. At length, just an hour after starting, we reached our destination. Below the artificial hill-top, on the north-east, is a beautiful grove of trees, and among them we found a group of boys who informed us that the place was known as Jebal Kefireh. The whole level top of the hill is surrounded by a great quadrilateral wall of massive stones, some of which are drafted. The top wall is 10 to 15 feet high outside, though on the level of the earth inside, and several high terraces lie immediately below. The whole area is thick with fragments of ancient (Roman) pottery, including many jar-handles, none, so far as I saw, inscribed. The most striking thing about Jebal Kefireh is the surroundings. The mountain mass, of which the artificial hill is the western point and the summit, is isolated by two wadys, the northern one arising at Kubaibeh, and the southern, a very deep and rocky valley, commencing to the west of the little village of Katamah, which lies at its bottom. The two join immediately to the west of Kefireh and run west to Yalo (Ajlun). Above these valleys, the site of Chephirah towers: it is the place for a fortress post, as the Wady el Katneh must ever have been a vulnerable spot. From the lofty summit we see a great stretch of the Plain of Sharon with Jaffa on the north-west. At the end of the valley lies Yalo, and we can catch a glimpse of the Jerusalem-Jaffa road as it traverses the Wady el Khalil. Behind it, the hill of Gezer stands out prominently. The hill, isolated on the north, west, and south, is, to the east, somewhat separated from the mountain ridge to which it belongs, by a shallow valley. The site is the ideal one for safety in ancient days. The spring which now supplies the valley of Katamah, may have supplied Chephirah, but against times of siege, there were reserve supplies in cisterns, the ruins of which can be seen to-day."