



**The Half Shekel Journals of 2023** by Pastor Ed Rice  
**#23010 Tue 21 Mar at Nazareth Village**

Nazareth, as called out in the Book of Matthew, gives a good perspective for our next visit:

*Mt 2:23 And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.*

*Mt 4:13 And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim:*

*Mt 21:11 And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.*

*Mt 26:71 And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth.*



Right on schedule at 0930 Tuesday, Costia pulled our tour bus into the parking lot of Nazareth Village (32°42'02.94"N 35°17'29.06"E). Nazareth Village was a “Living-Museum of Jesus' Time” and we had already heard some things about the village from Steven and Shari Khoury, the Missionary friends of Pastor Dewy Stewart. Shari worked at the village and spoke very highly of it; she was disappointed that she would not be working while we visited. With little other introduction we stepped back in time a couple thousand years into a small rural village called Nazareth.



The website of Nazareth Village gives this background of the living museum:

Set on the outskirts of old Nazareth, the Nazareth Village is built on ancient agricultural land that boasts the area's last remaining first-century wine press. The original farm has been restored with its ancient wine press, terraces, irrigation system and stone quarry, and exact replicas of first-century houses, a synagogue, a watchtower, mikveh and olive



presses have been carefully constructed using the original building methods and materials.

Together, these elements form the Nazareth Village, an authentic first-century farm and archaeologically accurate re-creation of the hometown of Jesus with real ties to the life and time of His friends, family and fellow Nazarenes.

Pilgrims to the Holy Land typically only see the dead stones of ancient ruins, but the geographical and cultural nuances of Jesus' teaching are often crucial to understanding their full meaning. At Nazareth Village, Bible scenes are brought to life by "villagers" who populate the farm and houses, living and working with the same type of clothing, pottery, tools and methods that Mary and Jesus would have used. Gifted and knowledgeable guides lead visitors through a living representation of the parables of Jesus within their original context before offering the opportunity to seal the experience with an authentic Biblical meal.

As part of the Nazareth Trust, which runs the nearby Nazareth Hospital, Nazareth Village is a not-for-profit organisation that covers most operations through entrance fees and gift shop sales. However, it welcomes contributions to cover programmes for children, Biblical and archaeology courses, and especially the ongoing preservation and development of the Nazareth Village site.<sup>1</sup>



Our village tour guide met us in the entry way of the village. She was not dressed in the full apparel of the day but explained that others would be, and would speak in first person of "their village." The village center was all about both its wine press and its olive press. The name *Nazareth* is a derivative from the Hebrew word *Netzer* found in the Bible, appropriately, in Isaiah 11:1 "And there shall

come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch <05342> shall grow out of his roots." (Strong's Hebrew Lexicon gives <05342> נֶצֶר netser [nay'-tser], translated in AV-branch 4 of 4 times, and meaning "sprout, shoot, branch", always used figuratively.)

1 From <https://www.nazarethvillage.com/about/>, accessed 09/07/2023



As we headed out toward the wine press on the rocky side of a hill we walked through some of the agricultural areas of Nazareth. The olive trees had a unique backdrop as you could see the modern Nazareth over some of the garden wall. Just the same, this park, with its unique and ancient garden area was far removed from modern. It displayed well what Nazareth might have looked like when Jesus walked its



streets, ... they were not so much streets as they were well trodden paths. We passed a small shepherds cave, and the shepherd greeted us and told of his day and his business in town. Mrs. Shepherd came over, pointed out her favorite goat and told what a conniver he was as he leaned into her to get his head itched a little.



As we made our way up the grade a little further there was a cave like sepulcher with a rounded stone to guard its entry way. We all peered inside, it was, of course empty. We then came to what we were told was the ancient wine press. Fortunate that we were told; I don't think any of us would have made out the little basin in the rock where the grapes would have been crushed (with bare feet like in the "I Love Lucy" episode we were all familiar with; turns out the bare foot does not crush the grape seed, and crushed grape seeds make the wine bitter), nor would we have picked out the little channel that carried the juice down the hill to an awaiting bottling area. So that was what an ancient wine press looked like. Whoda thunk.

What an insightful tour this was turning out to be. There was all of this quiet, historic, picturesque garden area right beside the bustling modern city of Nazareth. As we pressed on through the expanse of the park we passed several farmers working in their gardens. Each greeted us with Hebrew greetings that we were just getting proficient at recognizing and responding to. (Thanks to the efforts of Tour Guide Eli). Their crops were just being planted and tended to, and they had "crop circles"<sup>2</sup> positioned to capture

2 You see what I did there; "Crop Circles" as known by many were hoaxes popularized in the last century by man's propensity to believe in UFOs and ET visitations. In our perilous times (2Tim.3:1-7) of these last days (Gen.49:1, Isa.2:2) that propensity will be further exploited by hoaxers and shysters, even



the latter rains of this March April time frame.



We came through the vineyards, of course there were no wires holding up acres and acres of grape vines as seen around Seneca lake where I pastor; it was curious to see how they used sticks and stones to hold up their grape vines. It quite reminded me of a Hebrew song that I was never able to set to music. God wrote it 2,800 years ago and had Isaiah his prophet write it down for him.

*Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard.*

*My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill:*

*And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine,*

*and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.*

Isaiah 5:1-2

God goes on to explain the meaning and purpose of his song:



those in our own government! Crop Circles were first mentioned in the 17<sup>th</sup> century when weather patterns in England knocked down wheat crops in odd patterns. This is still seen today, but in the 1970s when two drunk lads, Bower and Chorley said "Let's go over there and make it look like a flying saucer has landed", they attracted a flurry of self-appointed experts wielding mystical and magical pseudo-scientific research, conspiracy theories, and aliens that visited our planet. Voila, the patterns stamped in fields were treated as the activity of earth energies, ancient spirits, the anguish of Mother Earth in the face of impending ecological doom, and evidence of secret weapons testing and, of course, aliens. Otherwise intelligent beings supposed they were messages, buried in complex numerical codes, concerning a Great Change connected to the pre-Columbian Mayan calendar due to occur in 2012. People lie, effectively, very effectively. Hoaxes grow enormously, even astronomically. In 2023 progressive liberals trying to overthrow capitalism and install socialism are well entrenched in society and government; they and their woke moguls are hoaxing, lying, rigging elections, and significantly succeeding. The rapture will be in post-perilous times just as the Bible says.



*And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. 4 What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? 5 And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: 6 And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briars and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. 7 For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.*



Isaiah 5:3-7

God goes on in this chapter to pronounce six “Woe”s against Israel, and Isaiah himself adds a seventh woe in the next; *“Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts”* (Isa.6:5).

This song, and that seventh woe, might make one examine themselves and ask God's question, *“What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?”* The saved and unsaved alike could reflect here on what all God has done for them in their life. Done so that you, individually, as his pleasant plant, might bring forth righteousness. Don't produce “wild grapes” with your life, and face his judgment. We can be free of all condemnation and living daily in his righteousness:



*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. 17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that*



*the world through him might be saved.*

*18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

*... 36 He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. ... 5:24*

*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life (John.3:16-18,36,5:24).*



The first century olive pressing process described here was most impressive. Pastor Pickett had given us a John 15 “Bring forth much fruit” devotion back in the vineyard and now he put his *hand to the plough*, as it were, and showed us how the stone wheel press worked. There are many interesting things to be learned about pressing olives, and I journaled some of them back



at the Olive Factory in Half Shekel #2308 on page 65 and 66 of this book. Here at Nazareth Village we saw the ancient olive press that was used to press out the oil after the olives were crushed by the donkey driven rolling stone (It was conventionally donkey driven, today Pastor Pickett was only a stand in for the noble beast).

Before us was an exotic 1<sup>st</sup> century construction of a variable pressure press which immediately caught my engineering eye. Our



guide gave a good synopsis of the olive pressing process. The olive pulp taken from the rolling stone press would be put into pockets of the pressing baskets, ten or fifteen baskets were then stacked one on another inside of the press. There was a hole in the rock under the baskets that would capture the oil as it was squeezed out. As the pressing begins the stone weights are cantilevered onto the baskets until, with a series of pulleys and leverage, the full weight of all the stones press every ounce of oil from the pulp.

Each group of baskets is pressed three times, the first time you apply pressure you get the best quality oil. By God's law for the Hebrews the first fruits are to be offered to God, so the oil olive from this first pressing is taken to the temple to be used there. In the second pressing you get good oil olive which they used as food, medicine, perfumes, and cosmetics. By the time they got to the third pressing, however, the quality of the oil was getting pretty bad, and they would use it for oil lamps and making soap.

Our guide continued. The olive press has a very strong connection with Gethsemane, which literally means “press of oils”. Consequently the olive press gives a very good illustration of the pressure on our Lord Jesus Christ as he was praying in Gethsemane. In that garden he prayed three times, just as olives were pressed in three pressings and in that time, *“Being in an*



*agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Lu 22:44). As Isaiah 53 puts it, “4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. 5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.”*

Let us never forget what we saw here today, and let us never forget what our Lord Jesus Christ did for us on that old rugged cross.

At Nazareth Village we next went down to the potter's house. I cannot capture in this journal all that was reviewed there. Let it be said that as their potter spun a work on the wheel he spoke of several Bible applications and focused on Jeremiah 18 which begins, “1





The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, *2 Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words.*"

We all peered into the window of a 1<sup>st</sup> century house as we made our way to the carpenter shop. I had already journaled about the wood working plane called the A.S.P. in Half Shekel #2302 on page 12 of this book (with a picture of one on page 15), but here in the Nazareth Village carpenter shop they had several 1<sup>st</sup> century wood working tools, and several were in use as we watched. When I was a kid the best my imagination could conjure up for a first century carpenter was



somewhere between framing up a house or building a table and chair. Horizon's broadened significantly when I watched a carpenter use a spokeshave wood handle draw knife to form and construct a four foot diameter wagon wheel. And more again each year we visited the state fair carpenter shop to see demonstrations of 18<sup>th</sup> century woodworking wonders built with an axe, an adze, an A.S.P., a socket chisel, a firmer chisel and ripping chisel, a block plane, smoothing plane, router plane and scrub plane, a gimlet, pit saw and whip saw. Wood planes are made of ... wood, so are tool handles, work benches, and wood clamps.

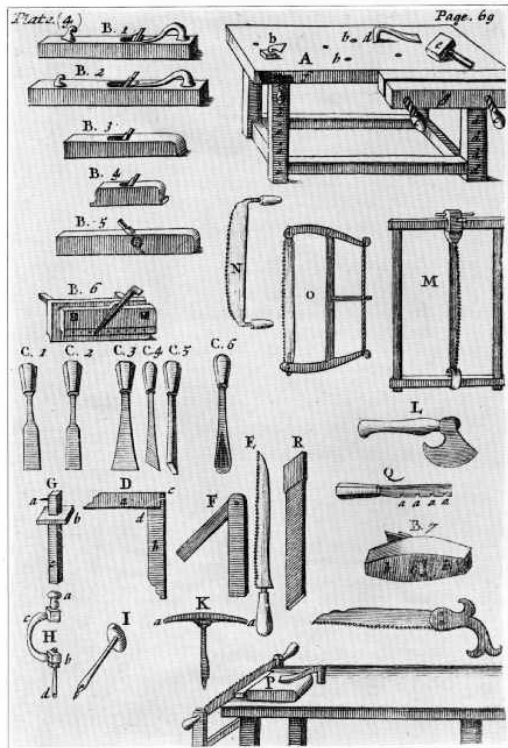


Figure 3.—1703: THE TOOLS OF THE JOINER illustrated by Moxon are the workbench (A), fore plane (B. 1), jointer (B. 2), strike-block (B. 3), smoothing plane (B. 4 and B. 7), rabbet plane (B. 5), plow (B. 6), forming chisels (C. 1 and C. 3), paring chisel (C. 2), skew former (C. 4), mortising chisel (sec. C. 5), gouge (C. 6), square (D), bevel (F), gauge (G), brace and bit (H), gimlet (I), auger (K), hatchet (L), pit saw (M), whipsaw (N), frame saw (O), saw set (Q), handsaw (unmarked), and compass saw (E). (Joseph Moxon, *Mechanick Exercises* ..., 3rd ed., London, 1703. Library of Congress.)

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We could all hone our understanding of what went on in a 1<sup>st</sup> century carpenter's home, and there is a book for that, "Woodworking Tools 1600-1900" by Peter C. Welsh<sup>3</sup>. Woodworking tools did not much change in time until the invention of the electric drill, and so just Welsh's Figure 3, picture included here (see fig3woodworkingtools.jpg), will help one better understand what Joseph, Jesus' stepfather, had in his woodworking arsenal. So did a short visit to Nazareth Village's carpenter's shop.

At Hanna the weaver's house in Nazareth Village we learned the 1<sup>st</sup> century skills involved in weaving wool clothes of Jesus' day. Annually for years Beverly and I went to the NY State Fair and for hours at a time

3 Welsh, Peter C., "Woodworking Tools 1600-1900", free from Gutenberg.org at <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/27238/27238-h/27238-h.htm>, accessed 9/14/2023.



hung around the crafts museum where women spun and wove wool, cotton, and linen clothes. Linen is made from flax, and there the intricate production of fine twined linen captured most of our attention. Much is made of it in the Bible, and to this day it can only be made by hand, flax not being conducive to manufacturing processes.

Here at the Village wool was sheared, washed and colored with all natural dyes made from onion skins, fig leaves, or the expensive spice saffron-crocus taken from the flower of the crocus plant. All kinds of natural foods, spices, barks and mosses are used to make dyes, and special “fixatives” were used to keep the dyes from fading. The Romans use of urine for their fixative brought a repulsive response, and it was implied that Hebrews drew the line there. Exotic blue, and purple, and scarlet dyes

were mentioned for their challenge, they, and the fine twined linen I mentioned earlier, are specifically called out in the Old Testament tabernacle construction:



*Ex 26:1 Moreover thou shalt make the tabernacle with ten curtains of **fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet**: with cherubims of cunning work shalt thou make them. ...*

*31 And thou shalt make a vail of **blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen of cunning work**: with cherubims shall it be made:*

*...  
36 And thou shalt make an hanging for the door of the tent, of **blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen**, wrought with needlework.*

They mentioned that purple was the color of kings and majesty but they didn't explain the interesting, “Why?” Turns out that God created purple as a profound combination of infrared and ultraviolet, which is the beginning and ending of the visible color spectrum, kinda like an Alpha – Omega of color. God inhabits that combination in the Revelation of Jesus Christ:



*Re 1:8 I am **Alpha and Omega**, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.*

*21:6 And he said unto me, It is done. I am **Alpha and Omega**, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.*

*22:13 I am **Alpha and Omega**, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.*



The other two colors of the tabernacle are equally intriguing. In God's careful design blue is the color of the sky, it robes the firmament which shows the handiwork of God, (Psalm 19). “Why is the sky blue?” is an interesting childhood question.<sup>4</sup> The firmament created by God is only seen in the night sky because of that blue sky. Scarlet is the color parked at the very brink of the visible light spectrum, it is the color of blood, it is the color of life, and yet it is the color of death and scorn.

So, enough about exotic dyes, in the weavers house, Hanna showed us how dyed wool was spun into threads and woven on a loom to make cloth. We next sat in the replica synagogue of Nazareth and talked with a scribe about how Hebrew Scriptures were carefully copied and preserved for three thousand years. It was perfectly intriguing, as was our whole hour tour of Nazareth Village. We gathered on the King-Long Tour Bus talking of the wonder and adventure we had seen, and Costia our driver headed us south on a 40 minute drive toward Harod National Park. For it was there “*the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the sea side for multitude* (Jud.6:5), and we needed to meet with Gideon at a spring there.



<sup>4</sup> The sky is not blue because of the Tyndall effect discovered by John Tyndall in 1859, nor because of the Rayleigh effect defined by Lord Rayleigh only a few years later wherein he showed that blue light hitting molecules of air is scattered more than red light by a factor of  $7/4$  raised to the fourth power. Nor is the sky blue because the human eye has three types of cones and one is the most sensitive to the blue wavelength of visible light, and less sensitive to the indigo and violet colors which approach the ultra violet invisible light. No, the sky is blue because there is a God in heaven who designed and created the light spectrum with such perfect grandeur that when it strikes the molecules of air in his atmosphere design, the Red, orange, yellow and Green spectra light pierce right through while the blue spectrum is scattered by the molecules. Indeed scattered to such an extent that an effervescent blue glow seems to carpet the sky and produce a day time closed curtain to the heavens beyond.