As a Classics and Philosophy major, I came to Ashkelon with no experience in archeology or the study of material culture. Though I could definitely learn more about the mechanics of particular archaeological techniques, I think I now have a much better awareness of the kinds of question to which archeology can be applied, and the way textual and archeological evidence can be inform each other to provide better answers to historical questions. I was surprised to learn that Archaeology was not primarily concerned with simply finding and preserving – I would not have imagined that it would ever be appropriate, for example, to just destroy a roman wall with pickaxes – but was rather a process of investigating particularly lines of inquiry. I was particularly interested in the way archeology allows us to observe the interactions of inhabitants of the site with what was left by those living there before them, for example, the Islamic robber trenches digging out the foundations of Persian period houses, and I plan on trying to study this topic in greater depth. Related to that, I also would be interested in learning more about the history of archeology as a discipline.

My experience of the dig was generally great. As someone who rarely gets up early or works out and who simply does not tan, I wasn’t sure how well I would cope with the early start, the physical exertion, or the hot sun. But although I was exhausted a lot of the time, I really did enjoy myself. I found working outdoors really rewarding, and I don’t think I’ve ever slept that well in my life. I also really enjoyed getting to know
my supervisors and the other volunteers, who turned out to be an interesting group of people.

I definitely regret not traveling more in Israel while I was there, and were I doing it over, I would plan to spend some time traveling by myself at the end of the season. My only real trip out of Ashkelon was a one night stay in Jerusalem, which ended up being somewhat overwhelming because it was so short and packed with sight seeing. Ashkelon itself seemed to be a pretty strange town, and I did enjoy wandering around there sometimes. I also really enjoyed the shorter field trips we took, to Tel Lachish for example, which brings me to perhaps my favorite moment of the trip – storming the ramparts of the Tel, as if I were an invading Assyrian.