This summer was absolutely wild. From digging to hotel drama to war tour and suddenly finding myself back at home too soon, I had an amazing time and think it was a valuable experience. The digging itself was some of the most laborious and frustrating work I have ever done, but also the most rewarding. I think I struggled most with tracing floors (there were just so many pits everywhere!) and understanding all the different occupational layers and periods, but I started to become more comfortable with this as the weeks went on. It was unfortunate we did not have a chance to fully uncover the destruction layer, since the stuff we did get to was really cool—Lynyrd and Skynyrd—and I would love to come back next season to continue excavating this layer. Another thing I was frustrated with in the beginning was not finding anything really “cool” (just sherds, bones, pits and/or untraceable floors), while others were uncovering scarabs or eyes or pieces of metal, but I eventually moved past this. I would say I miss taking out walls—that was pretty fun. It was also interesting to get a chance to work with the GIS total station and read the grid maps, since I have always been interested in taking a GIS course but have never had an opportunity to (it has conflicted with Greek for the past two semesters).

The field school was also great outside of Grid 51. It was cool to see the different types and stages of archaeological excavations that were taking place in grids 16 and 20. The lectures on the whole were very interesting, and I particularly enjoyed some of the more hands-on lectures that took place at the pottery compound. It was exciting to see all the other components that go into the archaeological process in addition to the physical excavations, such as the scientific testing, cataloguing and documentation. The field trips were also great, and I think my favorite was our day trip to the Masada, the Dead Sea and Ein Gedi. Jerusalem was fascinating as well, and I hope to make it back there sometime to explore further, as there is so much I never got a chance to see.

The field school and all its staff handled the whole situation of escalating hostilities between Gaza and Israel really well, and even though the circumstances for our trip up north were unfortunate, I thought they made the most of it and still provide a valuable and educational experience. We visited so many interesting sites in and around Galilee that I cannot even keep them all straight, even though they were all fascinating. I enjoyed wandering around medieval castles, and it was nice to see some remains from the Roman occupation, since I am slightly more familiar with that period.

Finally, the people I met and worked with this summer were incredible. It was great to get to know other students and professors from all over the country (and world), with all different interests. It was somewhat of a relief to be around students with different political and religious backgrounds than can be found at Wesleyan. I have been trying to keep in touch with some of these people, although that has been a little difficult since everyone has gone back to school and is really busy. Overall, I had a great experience at the field school this summer, and I would love to go back next season if I can.