

SEBASTIAN KLOR, *Between Exile and Exodus: Argentinian Jewish Immigration to Israel, 1948–1967* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2017). Pp. 256. \$54.99 paperback. ISBN 9780814343678.

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Sebastian Klor has written an excellent study of Argentine Jewish migration to Israel from 1948 to 1967. Klor places Argentine Jewish migrants within the context of overall immigration to Israel and reminds us of their significance. During the period under study, 94 percent of immigrants to Israel came from “countries of distress,” where Jews feared for their lives; the other 6 percent came from “wealthy countries” that were “home to the bulk of world Jewry”; Argentina was one of those countries, and Argentine Jews (mostly of Eastern European origin) accounted for 1.1 percent of the total direct migration into Israel. Gathering an impressive amount of data from various government agencies, and collecting a significant number of oral histories with Argentine Jews, Klor succeeds in answering important questions regarding the reasons behind their move to Israel. Rather than assume these migrants were solely guided by ideological reasons, Klor shows that these men and women chose to leave Argentina given the political and economic reality in their country. As well, Klor agrees with other scholars who suggested that those Argentine Jews who left Argentina for Israel were “marginal,” that is to say, not quite representative of the overall makeup of the Argentine Jewish community. So, while acknowledging the important contribution of Argentine Jews to the construction of the new state, Klor confirms that most Jews in Argentina who were in good economic situations chose to remain in their homeland.

The book begins describing the makeup of the Argentine Jewish community. In chapter 1, Klor introduces the reader to the historical development of the community, suggesting that, unlike Jews in the

United States, their identity was more “cultural and ethnic” than based on religion, but that they did not become completely assimilated to the host society. Klor stresses the fact that Jews considered Argentina their homeland while also being identified strongly with the Jewish national struggle. Jewish education, he argues, played an important role in imparting this secular character, as well as in contributing to the development of Zionist feelings. In chapter 2, Klor focuses on the motives behind Argentine Jewish migration to Israel in the 1950s and 1960s. During this period, Klor shows, the potential for migration lay largely with Zionist youth movements, and not with the middle class, which found it hard to liquidate their assets in order to move to Israel. He argues that, overall, the economic and political crises in Argentina played more significant roles in inciting migration than did anti-Semitism. As well, Klor shows how Argentine Jews chose to leave the country during specific economic and politically tumultuous times, but many chose other countries rather than Israel.

In chapter 3, the focus switches to Israeli policy and Klor here outlines the changes in policy regarding immigration to the new state. Immigration was not completely free and unrestricted; who came in when was closely monitored by the Jewish Agency and the Israeli government, who often did not cooperate with each other. Unlike those Jews who were in “countries of distress,” and whose migration to Israel was given priority, those living in “developed countries” faced certain limitations based on age and their potential economic contribution: 80 percent of Jews coming from these nations had to be young (under thirty-five), ready to live in kibbutzim and be in good health; the remaining 20 percent could be older than thirty-five only if they belonged to a family group in which the main breadwinner was under thirty-five. Argentina was categorized as a “developed country,” even when many officials continued to claim that anti-Semitism was one of the main reasons that would push Argentine Jews to migrate. Klor does an excellent job describing the myriad offices that had jurisdiction over migration, and the ways in which they duplicated and complicated the process of application. Chapter 4 outlines how the immigration bureaucracy in Argentina became even more convoluted in the 1950s. Several issues contributed to this: new agencies created in Israel, and the involvement of immigrant groups in Israel (like OLEI: Latin American Organization in Israel) with issues of absorption. Candidates for migration were required to conform to the selection criteria, had to have paid their share to the United Jewish Appeal, include a list of skills they could perform, and pass a medical examination (including

proving that males were circumcised) which required they visit three facilities to complete. Final approval was granted by the Aliyah Department in Jerusalem and the Absorption Department in Tel Aviv. All this red tape changed in the early 1960s, driven by a desire to increase immigration of middle-class Jews. These new migrants would be eligible for a loan to purchase a store or workshop, and they could select where to live. Klor also writes of the efforts of officials to speed up the process of application and unifying operations. The record number of immigrants from Argentina in 1963 suggests that these changes were successful.

It is in chapter 5 where we find Klor's detailed analysis of the data he collected for the Argentine Jews who migrated to Israel. Tables show numbers, age, gender, and professions, which outline the overall demographics of this migration. The numbers confirm what the policies adopted by the agencies had desired to shape: migrants were mostly young people and families, professionals about to start their careers (as opposed to already established), and working class (manual, blue-collar, and clerical laborers); two-thirds of them made their first homes in kibbutzim and "development zones." In chapter 6, Klor allows the readers to hear the voices of those immigrants. Bringing examples from *chalutzim* (members of youth Zionist groups), capitalists, and university graduates, Klor concludes that these stories corroborate some of his findings (the complicated bureaucratic nature of the process of migration, and the importance of chain migration as an analytical category, for example), but not others: the centrality of economic factors in their decision to migrate are seldom mentioned in these narratives. Klor makes a case for reading personal narratives always against statistical analysis.

Klor's study lays bare the fact that Argentine Jewish immigration was the result of limitations and complications created by the policies adopted by the many agencies of the new state, as well as by the existing economic and political reality in Argentina. While Klor does an excellent job at showing how economics and politics in Argentina led Jews to consider leaving, he is perhaps too quick to dismiss the role ideology played in, for example, making parents of *chalutzim* begin to consider the possibility of moving (although he does raise the importance of chain migration as a category of analysis). In a sense, ideology was tempered by economic considerations, but not erased. Also, I question Klor's acceptance of the notion of "marginal" migrants, especially as applied to young people. Those young *chalutzim* "training" to move to Israel were indeed central to the education of

other young people, and in fomenting a new understanding of a Jewish diasporic identity. Argentine Jewish leaders and institutions certainly sought to integrate these men and women's proposals so that their voices did not remain in the margins.

But these shortfalls in no way outweigh the contributions this book makes to our understanding of the migration of Argentine Jews and to studies of migration in general. Like others before him, Klor gives attention to how movement was limited by both receiving and sending states defining what opportunities were available to people. He also demonstrates the importance of collaboration between historians and other social scientists, by using methodologies that combine quantitative and qualitative aspects. Future scholars will now be able to evaluate how focusing on those Argentine Jews who *returned* to Argentina after trying to make a new life in Israel complicates or corroborates this picture.