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Back to the Soil: The Jewish Farmers of Clarion, Utah, and Their World. By Robert Alan Goldberg. (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1986. xxviii + 196 pp. $19.95.)

Clarion colony in Utah (1911–1916), now generally forgotten, was in its day one of the better known of many failed attempts to form a Jewish agricultural colony in the United States. In this volume, billed as both "an examination and an elegy," Robert Alan Goldberg argues for the significance of Clarion's story as an example of a movement "central to Jewish life in the modern period." To justify that claim, he attempts to place the colony in the contexts of nineteenth-century Russian-Jewish history, of turn-of-the century immigrant history, and of modern Jewish agrarianism. Charles S. Peterson, in his valuable foreword, adds additional background information on the agricultural situation in Utah.

Goldberg, limited to English language sources, seems ill at ease in Russian-Jewish history and skips quickly over critically important Jewish ideological disputes associated with such words as "normalization" and "productivization." His volume is thus most valuable for the new light it sheds on Clarion itself. Here his research is truly prodigious, and he has uncovered a great deal of important information. The five factors that, according to his analysis, explain Clarion's failure—lack of farming experience, difficult environmental conditions, insufficient capital, deteriorating morale, and readily available alternatives to agricultural colonization—are, if not totally surprising, certainly convincing.

In some chapters, unfortunately, Goldberg's arguments fall short. His comparison between Clarion colony and *moshavim* in Israel is superficial. His claim that colonies like Clarion form "an essential part of the Jewish-American experience" remains unproved. His portrayal of the Jewish Agricultural Society cries out for greater balance. In addition, he occasionally falls into embarrassing errors. He defines *shtetl* as "regional market center," when in fact it means a small town. He calls Clarion "the last of the major attempts to colonize Jews on the land in the United States," when in fact there were larger and more significant efforts in the 1930s. He laments scholarly "amnesia about the Jewish effort to return to the soil in America," when in fact his is the third major book on the subject since 1970. The other two, both cited in his bibliography, are Joseph Brandes's *Immigrants to Freedom* (1971) and Uri D. Herscher's *Jewish Agricultural Utopias in America, 1880–1910* (1981).

Still, *Back to the Soil* makes a useful contribution. It pieces together a previously unknown story, utilizes innovative methodologies, and serves as an interesting case study of an agricultural colony's rise and fall. When a full-scale study of the Jewish "back to the soil" movement is written, Clarion, thanks to this volume, will not be overlooked.

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