PART II

CLASSIC DIASPORAS IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY
Two themes dominate this article: the attachment of American Jewry to their historic homeland—the State of Israel; and the role of this Diaspora’s ingrained liberalism in this connection.

Despite much scholarly work on the attachment to Israel and on American Jewry’s liberalism, a vast amount of research on the interconnection between the two still remains to be carried out. This article does not, however, attempt to encompass the subject fully. It is sufficient for our purpose to highlight the importance and nature of the interaction mentioned above and to offer both historical and contemporary examples of it.

I. Introduction

The Jewish Diaspora’s support of the development and independence of a Jewish state in the historic homeland (the Holy Land, the Land of Israel, Palestine) has always had a significant social-ideological dimension. Typically, the founding father of political Zionism, Benjamin Ze’ev Herzl, accompanied his basic political treatise, The Jewish State, with a comprehensive semi-utopian publication, Altneuland, in which he envisioned the future state as exemplary, progressive and wonderfully harmonious.

It seems though that the Zionist dream apparently faced a problem from the very beginning. Most of those Jews who were prepared to attempt to fulfill that dream, the pioneers and their followers in the Yishuv (the pre-state Jewish community) and in the newborn State of Israel came from non-democratic countries that had oppressed and persecuted Jews. Meanwhile, most of the Jews living in democratic countries were not personally involved in the Jewish national endeavor in the biblical Homeland. Who then would perpetuate Herzl’s noble vision?

It is significant to note that, basically the bulk of the Jewish settlers in the Holy Land did not reflect the political systems they had rejected.