Chronology of Events in the United States
1492 - Columbus embarks on the first of his voyages of discovery. Jews are expelled from Spain.

1654 - Portuguese recapture Brazil from Dutch, forcing Jews to flee. Boat with twenty-three Jews, mostly refugees from Recife, Brazil, arrives in New Amsterdam (New York), marking the beginning of Jewish communal settlement in North America.

1655 - Jews in New Netherlands are granted rights to trade, travel, and stand guard.

1656 - Jews in New Netherlands are granted rights to own property and to establish a Jewish cemetery.

1730 - America's first synagogue, Shearith Israel (The Remnant of Israel) is built on Mill Street in Lower Manhattan.

1740 - England grants naturalization rights to Jews living in the colonies.

1761 - The first liturgy for the Evening Services for Rosh-Hashanah and Yom Kippur are published in New York.

1763 - The synagogue building of Congregation Jeshuat Israel of Newport, Rhode Island, (later known as the Touro Synagogue), the oldest synagogue building still in use in America, is dedicated.

1775 - Francis Salvador, the first Jew to hold elective office in America, is elected to the South Carolina Provincial Congress.

1788 - The United States constitution is made allowing Jews to hold federal offices.

1789 - Gershom Mendes Seixas, prayer leader of New York's Jewish congregation, is invited to Washington's inaugural.

1790 - George Washington replies to Moses Seixas's letter on behalf of the Newport Hebrew Congregation using the off-quoted phrase that the United States government "gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance."
1802 - First Ashkenazic synagogue in America, Rodeph Shalom (Pursuit of Peace), is established in Philadelphia. First American Jewish orphan care agency, the Hebrew Orphan Society, is incorporated in Charleston, South Carolina.

1813 - Mordecai Manuel Noah is appointed United States Consul at Tunis in North Africa.

1814 - First American Hebrew Bible is published in Philadelphia by Thomas Dobson, using a text prepared by Jonathan (Jonas) Horwitz.

1817 - First Jews settle in Cincinnati.

1819 - In Philadelphia, Rebecca Gratz establishes the first independent Jewish women's charitable society, the Female Hebrew Benevolent Society.

1820 - Jews from the German lands begin to immigrate to America in substantial numbers.

1823 - The first American Jewish periodical, The Jew, is published in New York.

1825 - Mordecai Manuel Noah founds Ararat, a Jewish city of refuge on Grand Island in the Niagara River near Buffalo, New York. Reformed Society of Israelites is established in Charleston.

1826 - Maryland Assembly passes the "Jew Bill," removing restrictions that prevented Jews from holding public office.

1838 - Rebecca Gratz establishes the first Hebrew Sunday School in Philadelphia.

1840 - Abraham Rice, America's first ordained rabbi, emigrates from Bavaria. First organized movement by American Jewry to protest Damascus blood libel.

1843 - B'nai B'rith, a national Jewish fraternal organization, is organized in New York. The influential monthly periodical, The Occident and Jewish Advocate, edited by Isaac Leeser, appears.
1846 - Isaac Mayer Wise, later a leader of the Reform wing of American Jewry, arrives in the United States. A mutual aid society for Jewish women, later known as the United Order of True Sisters, is founded in New York, with lodges in major cities. It becomes the first national Jewish women's organization.

1849 - First High Holiday services are held in San Francisco.

1852 - Washington Hebrew Congregation is established, the first synagogue in the District of Columbia.

1857 - Isaac Mayer Wise introduces his "Minhag America" (American Rite) prayer book, hoping (in vain) that it would be adopted by all of America's Jews.

1859 - In response to the Mortara Affair, the Board of Delegates of American Israelites, American Jewry's first national "defense" organization, is formed.

1860 - Rabbi Morris Jacob Raphall becomes the first Jewish clergyman to deliver a prayer at the opening of a session of the House of Representatives.

1861 - Civil War begins.

1862 - Judah P. Benjamin is appointed Secretary of State of the Confederacy. Jacob Frankel is appointed first Jewish chaplain in the United States Army. General Ulysses S. Grant issues General Order No. 11 expelling Jewish civilians from Kentucky, Tennessee, and Mississippi.

1863 - Gettysburg Address. President Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation abolishing slavery.

1867 - Isaac Leeser founds Maimonides College in Philadelphia, the first rabbinical school in America.

1871 - First Hebrew periodical in America, Ha-Zofeh ba-Eretz ha-Hadashah (The Watchman in the New World) is published in New York.
1873 - Union of American Hebrew Congregations is founded by 34 congregations across the United States. Although its founders hope that it would embrace all American synagogues, it soon became the Reform Jewish congregational union.

1875 - Isaac Mayer Wise founds Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, which becomes the rabbinical seminary of the Reform movement.

1876 - President Ulysses Grant and his cabinet attend the dedication of Washington DC’s Adas Israel Hebrew Congregation.

1877 - Joseph Seligman, a prominent New York banker, is barred as a Jew from registering at the Grand Union Hotel in Saratoga, New York, marking the growth of social anti-Semitism in America. New Hampshire grants Jews political equality.


1881 - Pogroms (massacres often with government collusion) and anti-Jewish persecution in Russia after assassination of Czar Alexander II and the ascension of his successor, Czar Alexander III. Massive migration of East European (especially Russian) Jews to America begins, impelled by persecution and lack of economic opportunity.

1885 - Pittsburgh Platform articulates the tenets of American Reform Judaism.

1886 - *Etz Chaim* (Tree of Life), the first yeshiva for Talmudic studies in the U.S., is established in New York.

1887 - The Jewish Theological Seminary opens in New York.

1889 - The Hebrew Educational Aid Society, antecedent of the Educational Alliance is founded on the Lower East Side to assist Eastern European Jewish immigrants.

1891 - Establishment of Baron de Hirsch Fund in New York and the Jewish Colonization Association in Paris to assist emigrants and promote Jewish agricultural settlements.
1893 - Hannah Greenebaum Solomon establishes the National Council of Jewish Women at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago

1895 - The American Jewess is published, the first English language periodical for American Jewish women

1897 - First Zionist Congress is held in Basel, Switzerland. Yiddish Socialist Labor party (the Bund) is founded in Russia. The Yiddish language Jewish Daily Forward is founded in New York. The Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary begins training Orthodox rabbis.

1901 - The Industrial Removal Office is established to help relocate Jewish immigrants from the Lower East Side, New York, to communities across the United States

1902 - Agudath ha-Rabbanim, the Union of Orthodox Rabbis, is founded in New York.

1905 - American Jews celebrate the 250th anniversary of receiving the right to settle in New Amsterdam.

1906 - In response to the Kishinev pogroms, the American Jewish Committee is founded to safeguard Jewish rights internationally. Oscar Straus is appointed Secretary of Labor and Commerce, the first Jew to hold a U.S. Cabinet post.

1912 - Henrietta Szold founds Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America. Financier and philanthropist Jacob Schiff purchases large Hebrew book collection for Library of Congress, leading to the establishment of the Semitic Division in the following year

1913 - B'nai B'rith founds the Anti-Defamation League to combat anti-Semitism in the United States, in response to the Atlanta trial of Leo Frank, a Jewish factory manager wrongly accused of murder.

1914 - World War I begins. During World War I, Russian forces in retreat drive 600,000 Jews from their homes. American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee is founded to provide funds and assistance for Jewish war relief. First boarding house for Jewish vacationers opens in the Catskills, which will lead to the development of the area into a major vacation destination of national reputation.
1915 - A mob kidnaps and lynches Leo Frank on learning that the governor of Georgia had committed Frank's death sentence to life in prison.

1916 - Louis Brandeis becomes first Jewish Supreme Court justice.

1917 - Balfour Declaration declares that the British government favors the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine

1918 - American Jewish Congress is founded to help secure Jewish rights in post-War Europe and Palestine.

1922 - Mordecai M. Kaplan founds the Society for the Advancement of Judaism, the cradle of the Reconstructionist movement; Judith Kaplan (Eisenstein), Kaplan's daughter, celebrates first American Bat Mitzvah.

1925 - Florence Prag Kahn of San Francisco becomes the first Jewish woman elected to the U.S. House of Representatives.

1927 - Warner Brothers produces drama of Jewish acculturation, The Jazz Singer, the first film with sound.

1928 - Yeshiva College is dedicated in New York. The first chair in Jewish history at a secular university in the United States is endowed at Columbia University.

1933 - The American Jewish Congress declares a boycott of German goods to protest the Nazi persecution of Jews. Albert Einstein leaves his academic post in Nazi Germany to reside in United States.

1942 - Rabbi Stephen S. Wise receives the "Riegner Telegram" confirming the Nazi intention to murder the Jews of Europe and turns to the State Department for help.

1944 - Camp for Jewish war refugees is opened at Oswego, New York.
1945 - World War II ends. International tribunal for war crimes is established at Nuremberg. United Nations is established. Bess Myerson becomes the first Jewish woman to win the Miss America Pageant.

1948 - State of Israel is established. Brandeis University is founded as first nonsectarian, Jewish-sponsored, institution of higher education. President Harry S Truman recognizes the State of Israel within its first hour of existence. U.S. Congress passes the Marshall Plan.

1953 - Julius and Ethel Rosenberg are convicted and executed for espionage.

1954 - American Jewish community celebrates tercentenary of Jewish life in America. Stern College for Women is created as a branch of Yeshiva University in New York City. Supreme Court issues ruling in Brown v. Board of Education ending legal segregation in U.S. schools. The phrase "under God" is added to the Pledge of Allegiance.

1955 - Martin Luther King Jr. initiates the bus boycott to end racial segregation on public transportation in the South.

1958 - Reform Jewish Temple in Atlanta is dynamited by a group of extreme segregationists.


1965 - Abraham Joshua Heschel walks with Martin Luther King Jr. on civil rights march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama.

1967 - “Six Day War” between Israel and its neighbors.

1969 - Association for Jewish Studies founded.

1972 - Eleven Israeli Olympians in Munich are murdered in terrorist attack. Hebrew Union College ordains Sally J. Priesand, making her America’s first woman rabbi.
1973 – “Yom Kippur War” between Israel and its neighbors. The first National Jewish Women's Conference is held in New York, attended by over 400 women.

1980 - First Jewish film festival is held in San Francisco.

1983 - Jewish Theological Seminary votes to ordain women as Conservative rabbis.

1984 - Madeleine M. Kunin is elected governor of Vermont, becoming the first Jewish woman governor in the United States. Shoshana Cardin of Baltimore becomes the first woman president of the National Council of Jewish Federations.

1985 - Formation of Republican Jewish Coalition

1992 - The first Jewish women senators, Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer, are elected to the U.S. Senate – representing California.

2000 - Senator Joseph Lieberman is the first Jew nominated for vice-president by a major political party.

2001 - September 11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and on the Pentagon.