

Pale of Settlement Timeline

- 1648 – 1650 A Cossack revolt against the Catholic church and the Polish nobility traps Jews in Ukrainian lands. Thousands die in the Chmielnicki pogroms.
- 1768 The Haidamak Cossack uprising kills many thousands of Jews in Uman and other towns.
- 1772 – 1795 These violent rebellions weaken the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and a partition takes place in three stages. In their land grab, Russia inherits the largest Jewish community in the world.
- 1791 Catherine the Great bars her Jewish subjects from inner Russia. She restricts Jewish residence to the newly acquired territories, which will become known as Congress Poland and the Pale of Settlement.
- 1796 Catherine the Great dies; Paul I becomes czar.
- 1801 Paul I is murdered; his son, Alexander I, becomes czar.
- 1804 Commission calls for the removal of Jews from small villages within three years.
- 1807 Relocation halted, first by concerns about Napoleon, and then by the economy.
- 1812 Russia defeats Napoleon's invading army. Bessarabia incorporated into the Pale of Settlement.
- 1815 Russia creates Congress Poland from ten Polish provinces. In practice, the treatment of Jewish subjects residing in this puppet state resembles the treatment of Jews in the Pale of Settlement.
- 1823 Over twenty-thousand Jews expelled from the countryside in Mogilev and Vitebsk Gubernias.
- 1825 Czar Nicholas I, Alexander's younger brother, seizes control of the Russian Empire after the failed Decembrist revolt.
- 1827 Jews expelled from Kiev. Nicholas I introduces military conscription quotas which include Jewish boys and men twelve to twenty-five years old. The czar inducts around fifty thousand Jewish children during his reign. Harsh conditions and a twenty-five-year service, toward which the years prior to age eighteen do not count, lead to death or conversion for many. The Russians make local communities collectively responsible for fulfilling the quota of four to eight recruits for every one thousand people on the tax rolls.

- 1835 Statute passes, which Jews mostly ignore, directing Jewish schools to teach in Russian. The Pale and its provinces are formalized. More cities and towns ban Jewish settlement.
- 1843 Nicholas I orders the expulsion of Jews from within fifty versts of the Russian Empire's western frontier. In 1858 this is amended, so only new settlement is banned.
- 1844 The kahal, the nearly autonomous Jewish self-government organization, is officially abolished. The Jewish community is still responsible for taxation and fulfilling the czar's conscription quotas.
- 1845-1851 Measures directed at Jewish dress and appearance vary from region to region and include a tax for wearing yarmulkes in public and a ban on wearing side locks.
- 1855 Czar Nicholas I dies; his son, Alexander II, launches his great reforms, which include expansion of the empire's rail system.
- 1856 Alexander II suspends conscription of Jewish children.
- 1855-1859 Alexander II opens universities to Jews and permits essential Jewish merchants to live outside the Pale of Settlement.
- 1859 Odessa Pogrom
- 1861 Alexander II abolishes serfdom. He allows Jewish doctors and university graduates into the interior of Russia.
- 1863-1864 Polish Rebellion is defeated. Russia suppresses the Polish language and culture and steps up its Russification strategy. Expanded rights of Jews in the Pale extends to Jews in Congress Poland.
- 1865 More Jewish skilled workers are allowed to reside beyond the Pale of Settlement.
- 1866-1867 Two assassination attempts against Alexander II fail.
- 1871 A second, more violent pogrom, occurs in Odessa, twelve years after the first.
- 1879-1881 In a two-year span, the radical group, the People's Will, tries to assassinate Alexander II four times. They finally succeed on March 1, 1881.
- 1881 Pogroms explode across Ukraine and elsewhere, and continue for a year, then become intermittent before ending in 1884. Czar Alexander III, a fervent antisemite, begins to roll back his father's reforms. Jews start to emigrate in larger numbers. Between 1881 and 1914, 1.5 million Russian Jews leave their homes and settle in the United States.

- 1882 Measures called the Temporary or May Laws include new rules limiting Jewish rights of residency in the Pale of Settlement. Other restrictions against Jews are added in successive years and remain in effect until 1917.
- 1884 Jewish participation in various professions is decreased or banned.
- 1886 Jewish attendance at universities in the Pale of Settlement is capped at ten percent of the student body, five percent for universities outside the Pale, and three percent in Saint Petersburg and Moscow.
- 1891-1892 Twenty thousand Jews are expelled from Moscow.
- 1894 Alexander III dies; his son, Nicholas II, rules Russia until 1917.
- 1897 Census counts 4,899,000 Jews in the Pale of Settlement— ninety-four percent of the total Jewish population in Russia and twelve percent of the general population of the Pale. Ninety-nine percent name Yiddish as their first language. Jewish nationalism leads to the first Zionist congress.
- 1903-1906 Pogroms, even more violent than the 1881 outbreaks, erupt in hundreds of towns and villages.
- 1905 The first Russian Revolution fails.
- 1905-1916 Russia publishes several thousand antisemitic books with the support of the czar.
- 1914-1918 Over a million Russian soldiers are killed in World War I.
- 1917 The provisional Russian government officially abolishes the Pale of Settlement. The Bolsheviks seize control.
- 1917-1920 Civil war erupts between the Red Army's workers and peasants and the anti-Bolshevik groups. Widespread violence toward Jews (especially on the part of the White Army, Ukrainian rebels, and criminal gangs) far surpasses the pogrom waves of the late 19th and early 20th centuries and kills fifty thousand.