We invite you to begin your visit on the 4th floor. Starting with the very first Jews to settle in colonial America, the core exhibition flows chronologically as it highlights the diverse backgrounds, expectations, and experiences of Jews who came to the United States and the generations that followed. The exhibition illustrates the choices they faced, the challenges they confronted, and the ways in which they shaped, and were shaped by, their American home.

The Only in America® Gallery features the stories of hundreds of individuals—some well-known, others less so—whose stories are emblematic of the American Jewish experience.
CHOICES AND CHALLENGES OF FREEDOM
1945–TODAY

What’s your story? Jews and Judaism became increasingly mainstream in the postwar years, as antisemitism waned and legislation prohibiting housing and employment discrimination became law. Jews joined the migration to the suburbs and pioneered new communities. They celebrated the new State of Israel and joined the fight for civil rights, advocated for women’s equality, and worked to free Soviet Jews. Share your thoughts on current events in the Contemporary Issues Forum, and add your story to the Museum’s collection in our It’s Your Story video recording booths.

Did your family immigrate to America? From 1880 to 1924, nearly 20 million immigrants arrived in the U.S. More than two million eastern European Jews came with dreams of religious freedom and economic opportunity, hoping for success but facing the realities of starting anew. See how the Great Depression challenged all Americans, especially the children of immigrants, and how the rise of Nazi Socialism brought alarm and tragedy. Don’t miss the Entertainment Theater’s films that show the role immigrants and their children played in the rise of Hollywood.
What are our roots? America began as a sleepy colonial outpost and by the mid-nineteenth century had become the world’s most energetic society. Unprecedented economic growth, technological innovation, and territorial expansion made it a particularly attractive destination to those escaping the poverty and economic upheaval of central Europe. American Jews sought to preserve heritage and tradition while integrating into American society—a balance that minority communities strive for today. Don’t miss the interactive map, or trying on a costume in our family gallery!
We invite you to visit this floor during special exhibitions and events.

- Dell Theater: Open during special programs and available to rent.
- Special Events Space
What to see in an hour...

4th Floor

1. Touro Synagogue Model
   Establishing Communities
   Section 2 on map

2. George Washington Letter
   Embracing Freedom
   Section 1 on map

3. The Gratz Family
   Establishing Communities
   Innovation and Expansion
   Sections 2 and 3 on map

4. Civil War Uniforms
   Union and Disunion
   Section 4 on map

2nd Floor

9. Establishment of the State of Israel
   A Jewish State
   Section 9 on map

10. The Borscht Belt
    New Neighborhoods
    Section 10 on map

11. The Soviet Jewry Movement
    Freedom Now!
    Section 11 on map

12. American Menorah
    American Mosaic, Jewish Mosaic
    Section 12 on map

3rd Floor

5. Yiddish Typewriter
   Making America Home
   Section 5 on map

6. Eva Davidson
   Freedom Challenged
   Section 6 on map

7. Workmen’s Circle Plaque
   Competing Visions
   Section 7 on map

8. Helga Weiss’s Teddy Bear
   Anxiety, Alarm, and Fear
   Section 8 on map

1st Floor

13. Irving Berlin’s Piano
    Only in America

14. Leonard Bernstein’s Grammy
    Only in America

15. Henrietta Szold’s Autograph Book
    Only in America

16. Louis D. Brandeis’s Nameplate
    Only in America

Short on time? Here’s a must see guide to The Weitzman. You’ll be tempted to stray, but if your time is limited, stay this course. Just match the section numbers under each image with the section numbers on the floor plan, and enjoy the stories behind some of our most beloved objects.