

# JUDAISM



Judaism is with ca. 14 million members both the oldest and smallest monotheistic religion.



The Jews dispersed all over the world, outside of Israel, constitute the 'diaspora'. Some Jews are Zionists, which means they support a Jewish nation state in Zion, another word for Jerusalem.



Judaism has a decentralized structure, with many different branches or denominations, from ultra-Orthodox to Liberal. Each denomination has its own institutions and religious leaders.



Because of its decentralized structure, Judaism offers no uniform way of approaching **contemporary challenges**:

## Radicalization

Judaism has its own dynamic of radicalization. Nowadays, we mostly associate radicalization with the ultra-Orthodox camp and its relation to the settler movement.



## Sacred Texts or Texts of Terror?

War and violence are part of the Jewish tradition. A lot of violent verses can be found in the Torah. These violent verses have been interpreted in different ways, sometimes legitimizing violence against other groups.

## Contemporary Jewish violence: the case of the settler movement

There is a bulk of evidence showing an increase of violence by Israel settlers against Palestinian farmers and landowners.

There are many causes for the Israel-Palestine conflict, both political and sociological. One major cause is religion. An extremist interpretation of the Jewish tradition leads to divinely sanctified violence against Palestinian farmers and landowners.

*"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!"*  
Psalm 133:1

*"He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, nor shall they learn war any more."* Isaiah 2:4

*"Also you shall not oppress a foreigner, for you know the life of a foreigner, seeing you were foreigners in the land of Egypt."* Exodus 23:9

## Polarization

Because of the many Jewish denominations, intra- and interreligious dialogue can be very strained. Orthodox communities usually live very secluded from their surroundings, and often refuse to acknowledge the existence of other branches of Judaism as legitimate.

## Environmental issues

Judaism, together with Christianity, has been accused of being responsible for the ecological crisis, because it purportedly promotes an uncaring attitude toward nature in the Torah. More liberal-minded Jews have taken important steps in countering this critique by connecting Judaism to ecology.

## Social issues

Progressive Judaism, for example Reform Judaism, prides itself on its egalitarian approach and attempts at social justice, while Orthodox Judaism remains critical of these approaches.



Funded by the European Union

*This infographic was funded by the European Union's Internal Security Fund – Police. The content of this factsheet represents the views of the authors only and is their sole responsibility. The European Commission does not accept any responsibility for use that may be made of the information it contains. Copyright @ EDUC8 2021. All rights reserved.*

