

PASSION PLAY CHANGES WELCOMED BY JEWS

NEW YORK (WNS) --The decision by the Town Council in Oberammergau, West Germany, to change their Passion Play so it focuses on Lucifer's role rather than that of the Jews in the crucifixion of Christ, has been welcomed by

both the American Jewish Committee and the American Jewish Congress. Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, the AJ Committee's national director of interreligious affairs, whose staff conducted two line-by-line analyses

of the Passion Play text in the past 10 years, termed the change a "significant breakthrough in the decades-long struggle to uproot prejudice & anti-Jewish hatred." The AJ Congress, which launched an inter-nat'l campaign nearly nine years ago to eliminate all anti-Semitism in the Passion Play, said it welcomed that Oberammergau has "finally come to appreciate the importance of presenting the crucifixion play with fidelity to the Biblical text and with regard to the sensibilities, rights & dignity of other religious faiths."

However, Rabbi Leon Klinicki, director of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith's dept. of Jewish-Catholic relations, said he welcomed the changes if they were real changes, but noted that "it is important to point out that in medieval times, Jews were charged with being agents of the devil and some texts even referred to Jews as the children of Lucifer. It is to be hoped that the elders have not exchanged one set of anti-Semitic references for another."

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