

# PASSION TRUST

## Antisemitism: Passion Trust Statement

Passion Plays in the UK were banned from the end of the sixteenth century until their revival in 1951. Now, with Passion Plays undergoing a resurgence in the UK, we actively work against any notion of antisemitism people might bring to these plays, whether they are acting in them or watching them.

There has been a long and damaging history of antisemitism in Europe between the sixteenth and the twentieth century. The medieval teachings of the Catholic Church, which blamed Jewish people for the death of Christ, has tainted many Passion Plays in the past.

Some Passion Plays have had a long history of antisemitism, especially performances of the Oberammergau Passion Play in Nazi Germany, which were praised by Hitler.<sup>1</sup>

The Passion Trust actively condemns any form of antisemitism in Passion Plays that take place in the UK and we work with our Jewish friends to seek understanding and reconciliation in all aspects of the rehearsal and production of contemporary Passion Plays.

As one member of the Passion Trust put it, 'how do we make our Jewish friends feel welcome?'

The resources we have put together here help us to remember to stay close to the Biblical account of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is clear in the Gospel accounts that Jesus was himself Jewish, and that his family, friends and supporters were Jewish.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the first people to hear his words and teachings were Jewish. There were many social, political and religious reasons given for the fact that some Jewish people, as well as some Roman people, wanted Jesus to die.<sup>3</sup>

Passion Plays that are sensitive to these contexts will be aware of the history that dangerously maligns Jewish people and will stay true to Biblical accounts, not historical injustices.

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<sup>1</sup> The American Jewish Committee and the Anti-Defamation League have worked with the Oberammergau play over many years and have produced some important resources which can be found at <https://www.ajc.org/OberammergauPassionPlay/Resources>

<sup>2</sup> 'Blog' Zondervan Academic, <https://zondervanacademic.com/blog/who-killed-jesus-the-historical-context-of-jesus-crucifixion>. See also the online course 'Four Portraits. One Jesus.' by author and teacher Mark Strauss.

<sup>3</sup> Kessler, Ed. 'The Pasion' from a Jewish Perspective, BBC, [https://www.bbc.co.uk/thepassion/articles/jewish\\_perspective.shtml](https://www.bbc.co.uk/thepassion/articles/jewish_perspective.shtml)