



The Hague

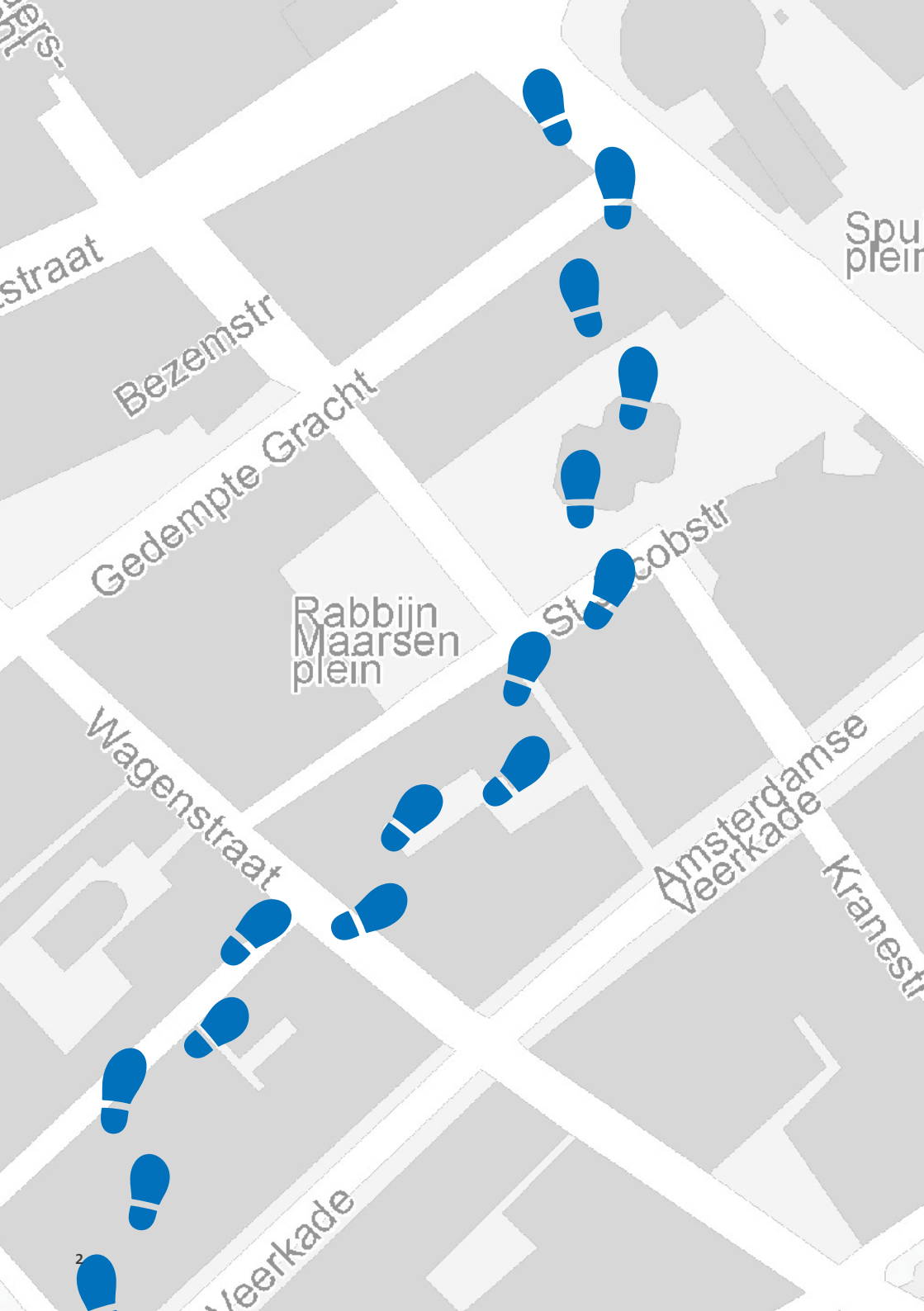
The Hague Municipal Archives

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD *SPEAKS*

WALK THROUGH '*THE VANISHED JEWISH NEIGHBOURHOOD*'
IN THE HAGUE

DRAAI OM
VOOR
NEDERLANDS





THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

Fenced by Spui and Wagenstraat
between Synagogue and New Church
feeling Spinoza's spirit,
One finds the Neighbourhood, like an
abandoned tombstone.

Never been the prettiest part of The Hague.
Just wandering, an image grows vaguely
which unrolls as a movie to me and clots
to memories
People, horses, wagons, small commerce
with chutzpah, mazal, but also deprivation
Finally dishonoured, her soul broken
Hollowed till silent emptiness
I knew it was only a traffic sign
Yet, I scared extremely when I read:
'He who will be parking here, will be towed
away'.

The former synagogue is now a mosque
I watched the telly today and read the papers
and I understood

Greetje van der Harst-de Leeuwe
June 2nd, 1996

THE NEIGHBORHOOD TALKS

Before World War Two, The Hague, and more specifically the centre of The Hague, was known for its active and thriving Jewish community. There were a lot of stores owned by Jewish people and schools with a lot of Jewish children. The synagogues in the centre of The Hague were there for the 17,000 Jewish inhabitants at that time. During the walking tour 'The Neighborhood Talks', you will have the chance to walk past specific historical Jewish sites from before the war. The audio tour will guide you through these sites.

The walking tour begins in the atrium of the city hall, where you will see a model of the old Jewish neighborhood. Then, you will be guided to various locations and building until you arrive at the Rabbijn Maarsenplein. Here you will see a monument created in memory of the majority of the 14,000 men, women and children who were sent away and murdered in the nazi concentration camps.

This book and audio tour will help you learn more about the history of the Jewish community in The Hague. A history filled with unique, emotional and moving stories that create an image of 'The Neighborhood'. I recommend 'The Neighborhood Talks' for anyone who wants to learn more about the Jewish history in The Hague.

*The Hague Municipal Archives
& Jewish Heritage Foundation The Hague*

Mobile app



Would you like to experience the walking tour with access to audio and more pictures on your Smartphone?
Scan the QR-Code! This will send you to the website: IZI.Travel.
Select: 'Open in the app'.
The tour can be taken in either Dutch or English.

Step-by-Step:

- 1 The tour is available for Windows, Apple and Android.
- 2 Scan the QR-code or go to izi.travel/nl/2dc2-de-buurt-spreekt/nl
- 3 Select: 'Open in the app'.
- 4 Your phone will check if the IZI.travel-app has already been installed on your phone.
If it has not been installed, then you will be asked if you would like to install the app.
- 5 Start the app and give it permission to use your phones location.
- 6 Select the option In the Neighborhood 'In de Buurt' on your home screen.
If you are close to the Jewish Centre of The Hague, then the walking tour will be listed on the top of the list. Otherwise, you can find the tour by looking up: The neighborhood talks 'De Buurt spreekt'.



Courtyard of a Alley (c. 1900)

1



START THE TOUR IN THE ATRIUM OF THE CITY HALL AT THE MODEL: THE VANISHED JEWISH NEIGHBOURHOOD: DE 'BUURT'.

MODEL OF 'THE VANISHED JEWISH NEIGHBOURHOOD'

Three hundred years ago, groups of Jewish refugees from Eastern Europe fled to the Netherlands. With no possessions to their name, they went to live in the poorest area of The Hague, near the old harbour. Their houses, often shacks, were built on swampy land. The walls were damp and the houses were subsiding. There were regular outbreaks of cholera, a fatal disease. This model shows what the neighbourhood looked like 200 years ago. The Jewish residents lived mostly from peddling on the streets. They spoke Yiddish, a language that developed from medieval German with Hebrew influences which has been

spoken by Jews for centuries. As the years passed, things gradually got better for these poor people. They arranged little synagogues, schools and shops in the 'Buurt', which is what they called their district. For three hundred years, the Jews lived in safety in The Hague. That was until the Nazis occupied the Netherlands in 1940 and deported 14,000 of the 17,000 Jewish inhabitants of The Hague. The 'Buurt' has changed. Other people live here now. The synagogue has become a mosque. But we'll take you back to 'the vanished Jewish buurt'.



Gedempte Gracht 154, store of the 88-year-old widow Matije Huisman (1926)

2



LEAVE THE CITY HALL AND CROSS SPUI STREET STRAIGHT ACROSS TO THE CORNER HOUSE AT 683 GEDEMPTE GRACHT. THIS IS WHERE ALEXANDER POLAK LIVED.

HOME OF ALEXANDER POLAK

In the spring of 1656, a Polish ship sailed into the harbour of Amsterdam. On board were Jewish refugees fleeing war and persecution. The Jews of Amsterdam looked after their fellow Eastern European Jews. One of these refugees was Züsskind Pos. Pos went to live in a house on the edge of the 'Buurt'. He was poor but after quickly becoming an official resident of The Hague, he was allowed to join the merchants' guild. Very few Jews were admitted to the guilds. Most of them were forced to earn their living in other ways, like peddling.

Polak opened a shop selling cotton and silk on the Spui Alexander Polak's greatest achievement was building a Jewish cemetery. Two things are very important to Jewish people:

- that they eat kosher food,
- that their dead are buried in a grave that is never moved.

Polak was buried in that same cemetery on Scheveningseweg in 1697. His grave is still there today.



Clothing of Paupers, Lithographs (1850)

3



WALK VIA THE SPUI PAST THE NIEUWE KERK. TURN RIGHT INTO ST. JACOBSTRAAT UNTIL THE ENTRANCE TO THE (PARKING) GARAGE. THIS IS WHERE SOLOMON'S TEMPLE WAS.

SOLOMON'S TEMPLE

Another Polish refugee, a jewellery merchant called Abraham Boas, bought a large building on St Jacobstraat in 1696. The house was so big that Abraham rented out a space that was used as house synagogue. This became known as Solomon's Temple. In 1722, a brand new synagogue was built on Voldersgracht. The Boas family were not too pleased, as this meant that they lost their tenants. However, one of their sons, Tobias, was a successful banker and when he travelled, he even took along his own kosher butcher. In that way, he could also have kosher food on the road in order to keep the Jewish

dietary laws. The house was owned by the Boas family for years. In 1839, one of Tobias's great-grandsons donated it to the Jewish community who turned it into an old people's home. Thirty-five elderly Jewish men and woman lived there in 1841. This house was the first Jewish old people's home in The Hague.



Matzah Bakers (1916)

4

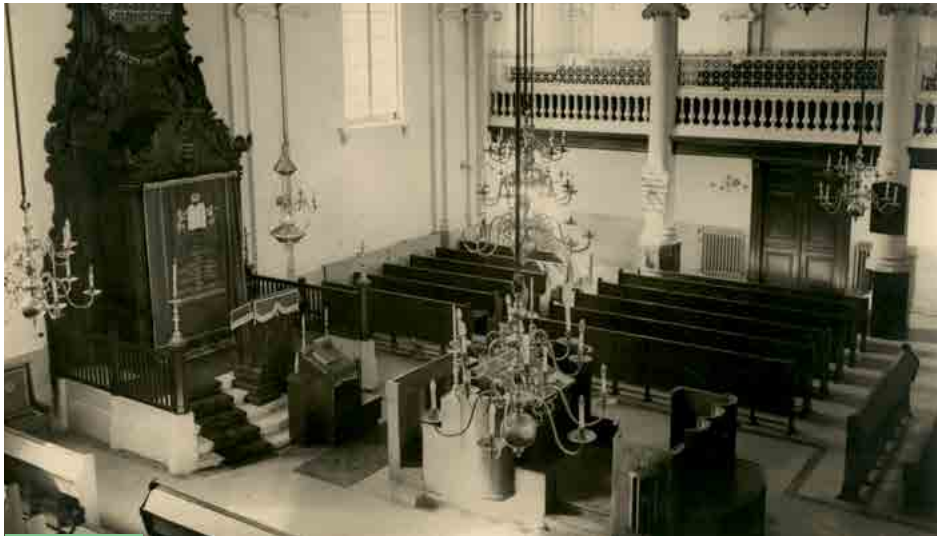


CONTINUE TO THE ARCH AT NUMBER 10, ON THE RIGHT-HAND SIDE. THE MATZO FACTORY USED TO BE NEXT DOOR.

MATZO BAKERY

During Passover, the holiday that celebrates the Exodus from Egypt, Jews eat matzos and no bread. Moses led his people out of slavery and brought them to the Promised Land. They left in great haste, eating bread on the way that had not had time to rise. During Passover, you won't find a crumb of ordinary bread in a Jewish home, only unrisen matzos. In 1912, this building was turned into a matzo bakery. It was only used around Passover. The bakers worked really hard in the weeks before Passover, making sure that the thousands of Jews in The Hague could buy matzos. Matzos were baked by hand and it had to be done quickly

to ensure the dough did not rise. The bakers rolled the dough out on a table with a steel top. They put pins in the dough to make holes in it so that the steam could escape. These holes prevented the dough from rising during baking. Today you can buy matzos in supermarkets all year round.



Interior of the Great Synagogue (1940)

5



CONTINUE TO WAGENSTRAAT.
CROSS OVER TO THE MOSQUE BEHIND THE GATE AT NUMBER 103.
UNTIL 1974, THIS WAS THE GRAND SYNAGOGUE.

GRAND SYNAGOGUE

For 130 years, from 1844 to 1974, the Aksa Mosque used to be the Grand Synagogue. The synagogue has a turbulent history. For a hundred years, it hosted services, holiday celebrations and Jewish weddings, and it was a place to share good and bad times. It was an upper-class synagogue and not everybody from the neighbourhood felt at home there. The synagogue was built in Greek temple style. Two houses on Wagenstraat were demolished to make way for the entrance to the synagogue.

In 1940, the Nazis brought an abrupt end to the glorious era of this wonderful 1844 building. After the war, the building was too big for the few Jews who were left in the community. Today, Turkish Moslems use it as a mosque.



Street Scene, Voldersgracht (1903)

6



THE HOUSE ON THE RIGHT NEXT TO THE GATE AT NUMBER 101
WAS THE MIKVA, THE RITUAL BATH.

MIKVA

The house on the right of the entrance used to be the mikva, the ritual bath. Many synagogues have a mikva. This type of bath is partially filled with 'living water'. In the Netherlands, this means natural rainwater. The mikva is used by women after they menstruate. According to Jewish law, women are regarded as impure during their periods and for seven days afterwards. Impure does not mean dirty or unsanitary, but she and her husband may not have any physical contact. After immersing herself in the water, she may again have relations with her husband.

Many brides still visit a mikva before their wedding. You might think that in Judaism many restrictions apply to sex. The opposite is actually true. For Jews, sex in marriage is a sacred obligation and one which may be enjoyed.



Menorah (1753), a nine-branched candelabrum used for Hanukkah

7



GO BACK ALONG WAGENSTRAAT UNTIL YOU REACH STILLE VEERKADE. CROSS THE STREET AND GO TO NUMBER 16. THIS HOUSE WAS WHERE THE EASTERN EUROPEAN SHUL WAS LOCATED.

EASTERN EUROPEAN SHUL

In the twentieth century, more Jewish refugees came to the Netherlands. They were called Eastern Jews because they came from Poland and Russia. During the First World War, a small group of refugees established themselves in Scheveningen. After the war more Jews from Eastern Europe came to the 'Buurt'. These small groups lived according to Jewish law. However, each had its own customs, spoke its own language or dialect and had its own connections. To them, the synagogues in The Hague were too fancy, too Dutch and too big. They probably did not feel at all at home there. That's why they set up their

own shuls for services and as schools. The word 'shul' comes from the German word Schule, meaning 'school'. Here, on Stille Veerkade 16, an Eastern European shul with a Torah study school was started in 1936. It was called 'Tiferes Jisroëll'. This was just before the Second World War. Even though it did not last long, this building again had a very Jewish function. From just after the war until 1965, it was once again used as a shul.



Street Scene, Gedempte Gracht (1915)

8



KEEP WALKING TO NUMBER 20. THIS HOUSE WAS ONCE THE FIRST JEWISH ORPHANAGE.

ORPHANAGE, STILLE VEERKADE

Tsdaka: a decisive word meaning justice, communal responsibility. Jews have a duty: whether you like it or not, you take care of others. And you don't complain. This is correct behaviour. Usually this means that you give money, but there are naturally people who act differently. Rabbi Berenstein was someone who helped others without hesitation. He was an energetic man. The rabbi started this orphanage for children in the 'Buurt'. From 1850, 11 Jewish orphans, 6 boys and 5 girls, were looked after in this house by Mr and Mrs Oppenheim.

Among the children were David and Salomon Huisman, whose parents and sister had died of cholera within one month of each other. Dirty, stagnant water is the cause of this deadly disease. For thirty years, this orphanage took care of children before it unfortunately became too small. The orphanage moved to Raamstraat, where it could accommodate 30 children.



Chief Rabbi B.S. Berenstein

9



CARRY ON UNTIL NUMBER 24. THIS WAS WHERE 'REB BEAR', CHIEF RABBI BERENSTEIN OF THE HAGUE LIVED.

HOME OF CHIEF RABBI BERENSTEIN

Reb Bear loved the 'Buurt' and the 'Buurt' loved him. Officially, you should say Rabbi Berenstein, but everyone in the neighbourhood referred to him affectionately as Reb Bear. Reb is a Yiddish (medieval German with Hebrew) word for Rabbi. It was the language of the 'Buurt' and Reb Bear was the religious leader of the neighbourhood. A rabbi explains the Torah in the synagogue and is present at important moments in Jewish life. Reb Bear was Chief Rabbi, but unlike many other rabbis he did not live in a big fancy house, but in this ordinary one in the middle of the 'Buurt'.

He was dedicated to his people for 45 years, from 1848 to 1893. Reb Bear could have a bad temper but he was fair and always there for people, especially the children, who needed his help.



Torah Scroll with Pointer

10



CONTINUE TO PAVILJOENSGRACHT. TURN RIGHT AND RIGHT AGAIN INTO NIEUWE MOLSTRAAT. NUMBER 15A TO 21P WAS THE SITE OF THE 'SECOND SHUL'.

NEIGHBOURHOOD SHUL

Despite its name, the 'Grand Synagogue' became too small for the growing Jewish community. Moreover, many of the real 'Buurt' people thought it was much too showy for them. They felt more at home in a little shul where you didn't have to get all dressed up to go there. They created that sort of shul on Nieuwe Molstraat. There were many meetings about it, because they first had to build a new balcony for the choir to use in the 'Grand Synagogue', which made it even more ornate. The poor people from the 'Buurt' couldn't even afford to pay for their own seats. But in 1925, a new administrative

building for the Jewish community had to be built. Finally a place was also found for a little shul, the Second Synagogue, on the Nieuwe Molstraat. The 'Buurt' now had its own cosy shul! It was a shul that you could go to without first putting on your best clothes. In 1938, it became a shul for the youth of the neighbourhood. Many Jewish young people met each other there.



Girls' Group in Jewish Home (1931)

11



GO BACK AND CROSS TO 31 PAVILJOENSGRACHT. THIS WAS THE 'JOODSCH TEHUIS'. THERE IS A PLAQUE ON THE WALL.

PLAQUE PAVILJOENSGRACHT

Once you've read this plaque, you'll know that it was from this point that most of the Jews from The Hague were taken away by the Nazis. From 1913 to 1943, the 'Joodsch Tehuis' was located here. This was the venue for a sort of after-school programme for the Jewish children from the 'Buurt'. In those days, that was very different than it is now. The children learned all kinds of 'useful' things, such as bookkeeping or embroidery. In fact the grownups wanted to keep the children, especially the girls, off the streets. They felt that children would only turn out bad if allowed on the streets.

During the Second World War, the Nazis gathered the Jews from The Hague here in the former 'Joodsch Tehuis'. Then, either on foot or by tram 13, they went to the 'Hollands Spoor' railway station. The train transported them to the transit camp 'Westerbork' in Drenthe. Every Tuesday, a packed train left Westerbork to the death camps. There over 12,000 Jews from The Hague were murdered. Over 12,000 murders!



Dolls in Orphanage Clothing

12



CONTINUE TO HERDERSTRAAT. CROSS OVER TO GEDEMPTE BURGWAAL AND TAKE THE FIRST LEFT (ON RAAMSTRAAT) AND GO TO NUMBER 45. THIS WAS AN ORPHANAGE.

ORPHANAGE ON RAAMSTRAAT

Behind this lovely façade, there was once a Jewish orphanage. It was opened in 1884 and used until 1931. Thirty orphans lived there. They were given a very strict upbringing and had to wear special clothes. Wherever they went, everyone knew they were an orphan. That was obviously embarrassing for the children. Passers-by would have thought: 'How sad, an orphan'. In the nineteenth century, there was a far greater chance that you would lose one, or both, of your parents than there is now. Many of the diseases that we can now cure were fatal then.

In the 'Buurt', hygiene was so bad that epidemics like cholera broke out. There were no toilets. Cesspits emptied directly into the canals. There was often a horrible stench in the air. In 1888, a canal was dug to empty the filthy water into the sea. It was only then that the city installed sewers.



Thorarol-mantels (1675-1727), Thorarol-kronen (1775) en siertorens (ca. 1700)

13



GO BACK TO GEDEMPTE BURG WAL AND PROCEED TO MARKTHOF, BEHIND C&A. BEHIND GEDEMPTE GRACHT 80 WAS THE HIDDEN SHUL ON VOLDERSGRACHT.

VOLDERSGRACHT SHUL

The first Jews who settled in the city met in small groups for prayer and education. There was once a house shul in an inn on the Bierkade, where the owner gave religious classes. High German Jews call a synagogue a shul, as it is mainly a place to learn. A gateway gave access to the synagogue on Voldersgracht, which was located behind some houses.

The shul was built in 1723 and remained here until 1844. It was a 'hidden shul', because Jews, while officially tolerated, were not allowed to build prominent synagogues. It was a real shul and anyone could walk in. It was located in the middle of the Buurt. This shul served as a prayer house for over a hundred years.



Jewish Children's Monument

14



GO BACK A BIT AND TURN LEFT INTO BEZEMSTRAAT UNTIL THE CHURCH WALL ON THE LEFT. ON THE OTHER SIDE, THERE USED TO BE A SCHOOL WITH A PLAYGROUND.

SCHOOL A & THE JEWISH CHILDREN'S MONUMENT

The square with the trees used to be a schoolyard. The three public schools around this square had the names A, B and C. School A on Bezemstraat was a public school for Jewish children only. In addition to regular school subjects, children were taught about Judaism and learned Hebrew. Jewish children were no longer allowed to attend their own elementary schools in The Hague and Voorburg, during World War II. They had to attend the Jewish elementary school on Bezemstraat until 1943 before they were deported to concentration camps. In the middle of the square is the Jewish Children's Monument. It reminds us that

about 2,000 Jewish children from The Hague were murdered by the Nazis during World War II. This particular monument is also a playground structure, with six steps or ladders that look like stacked chairs. They are empty chairs because the Jewish children are no longer there. The idea of the designers is, that through the chairs like a ladder you climb up, toward the Jewish children in heaven. The chairs bear the first names and ages of 400 murdered children.



I.B. van Creveld (1989)

15



THE JEWISH MEMORIAL MONUMENT CAN BE FOUND ON THE RABBIJN MAARSENPLEIN (RABBI MAARSEN SQUARE). THIS IS CLOSE TO THE OLD WALL (NIEUWE KERK). AGAINST THE WALL, THERE IS A SMALL MARBLE STONE IN MEMORY OF I.B. VAN CREVELD.

JEWISH MEMORIAL MONUMENT & THE HISTORY OF THE JEWISH NEIGHBORHOOD

Since 2018, the Jewish Memorial Monument in memory of Jewish Nazi victims has stood in Rabbijn Maarsen Square. In 1967 sculptor Dick Stins designed a Star of David containing four desperate people. The Star of David first hung on the Gedempte Gracht, but was incorporated into the new monument by artist Anat Ratzabi. The suitcases symbolize the deported Jewish residents of The Hague. The six seats represent six million murdered Jews and each seat shows the symbol of one of the twelve tribes of Israël. On the right side we see a replica of the plaque “Rachel weeps”.

The original hung in a school on Laan 5 in The Hague. It can now be found in the Museon. The plaque was an initiative of the students and former students in memory of the more than 100 Jewish students from their school who were taken away and murdered during the occupation. I.B. van Creveld (1921-2004) wrote the history of the Jewish neighbourhood and Jewish life. He arranged for the square to be named after Rabbi Maarsen and for the model of the neighbourhood to be placed in City Hall.

Colophon

This is a publication of
The Hague Municipal Archive
Spui 68
2511 BT Den Haag
haagsgemeentearchief@denhaag.nl
haagsgemeentearchief.nl

Revised Edition

Collaborating Partner Jewish Heritage Foundation The Hague
Text Max Dohle and The Hague Municipal Archive

Compilation and Final Editing The Hague Municipal Archive
Visual Material

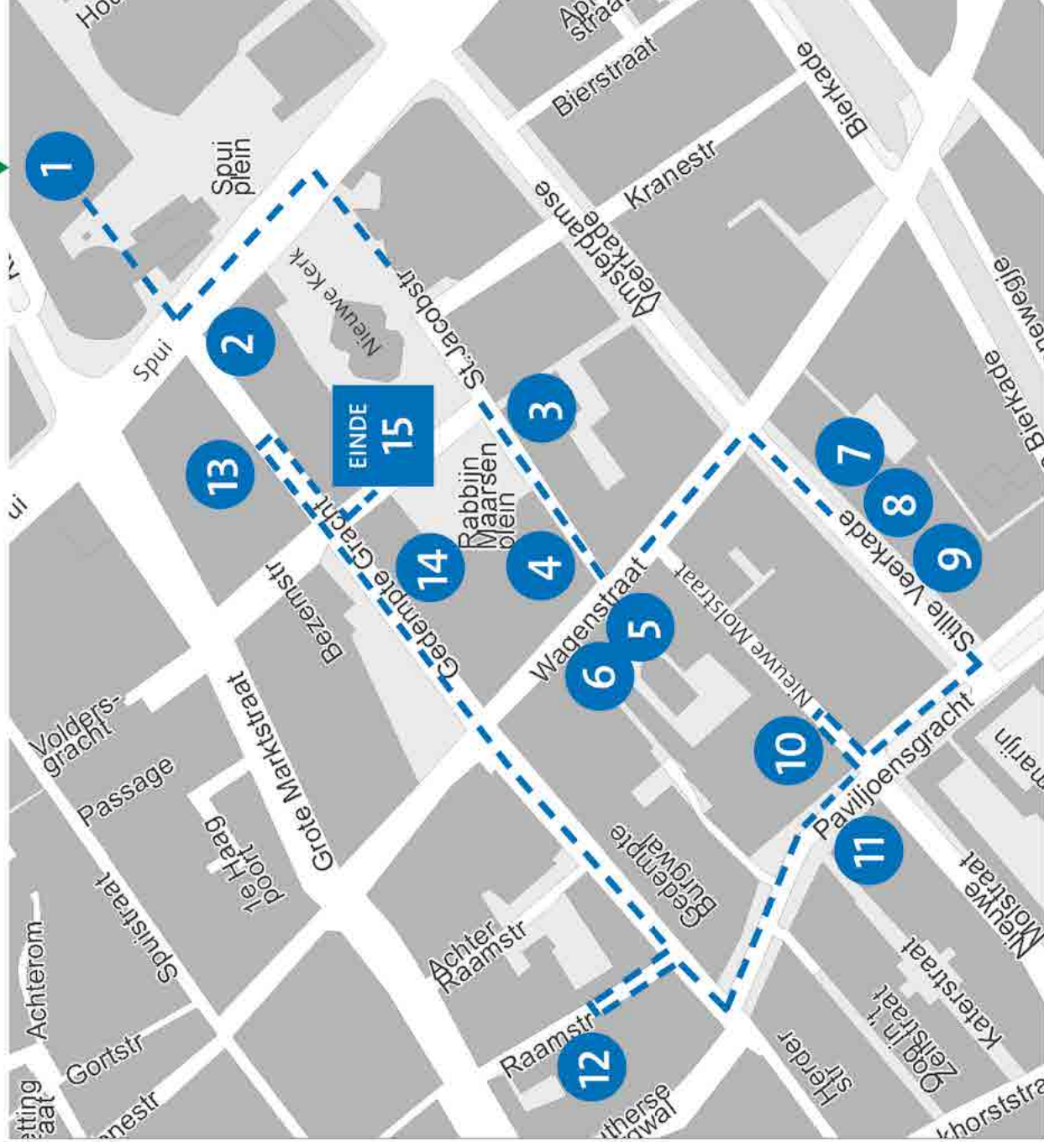
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Collection The Hague Municipal Archive
page 5, 6, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, english version page 4, 5, 6, 9, 8
National Archives/Spaarnestad Photo page 7(english version)
Corien Glaudemans page 4, 18, 17(english version)
Cees Verkerk page 18(english version)

Plaques Guisse Natuursteen bv
Audio Lucie van Stuyvenberg (Dutch) en Ted Young (English)

April 2025

De Wandeling | The Walk

START
STADHUIS



- | | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|----|----------------------------------|
| 1 | Maquette 'de verdwenen Joodse buurt' | 9 | Woonhuis opperrabbijn Berenstein |
| 2 | Woonhuis Alexander Polak | 10 | Buurtsjoel |
| 3 | Salomo's Tempel | 11 | Plaquette Paviljoensgracht |
| 4 | Matsefabriek | 12 | Weeshuis Raamstraat |
| 5 | Grote Synagoge | 13 | Sjoel Voldersgracht |
| 6 | Mikwe | 14 | School A en Joods Kindermonument |
| 7 | Oost-Joodse sjoel | 15 | Joods Herdenkingsmonument |
| 8 | Weeshuis Stille Veerkade | | |