



Jacobus Henricus Kann

The study of the various routes used to transfer Jewish deportees during World War II need not be concerned only with the routes themselves or the bureaucracy that created them and used them, but also with the personal stories of those who were forced to be the victims moved along on these routes of deportation. One such Jew is Jacobus Kann who was deported from Westerbork in the Netherlands to Theresienstadt (often referred to as Terezín, in the current Czech Republic). Kann's bureaucratic transport number was XXIV/7, a journey of two days starting on 4 September 1944 and ending on 6 September. Kann's personal journey is remembered in **Kiryat Yovel**, a Jerusalem neighborhood, where a Square is dedicated in his memory.

Jacobus Henricus Kann (1872-1944), banker and owner of Lissa & Kann Bank, which served members of the Dutch royal family. He is also the man who purchased the land for **Achuzat Bait**, the first houses of Tel-Aviv. On 10 July 1942, he wrote his daughter-in-law: "In a fortnight I will reach the age of wisdom" it took a long time to reach this age. I wonder how did we manage to bring the world to such an awful and chaotic state with so many people at the age of wisdom!!!"

Jacob Kann, a secular Dutch Jew by definition, was exposed to the Jewish national ideal as a result of the Dreyfus affair. In 1897 he attended the first Zionist Congress in Basel. With David Wolfsohn, future chairman of the World Zionist Federation, Kann founded the Jewish Colonial Trust. In 1902 Kann opened the Anglo-Palestine Bank in Jaffa, later known as Bank Leumi. He was among the founders of the Zionist Organization of Holland in 1899 and, in the same year, he purchased the first 60 lots of Achuzat Bait and thus enabled the beginning of construction of what later became known as the city of Tel Aviv.

Following Nazi occupation of the Netherlands in 1940 the bank closed. Kann and his wife were deported from their home in The Hague and on 29 September 1943, they were transferred to Westerbork where he became ill and was admitted to the camp hospital. "Afterwards," writes Lea Schweiger, a nurse who treated and accompanied the couple to Theresienstadt, "on September 3 1944 the terrible catastrophe happened as we were sent, nearly all of us, to Theresienstadt [...] we



were packed, with another 2,500 people into sealed freight cars. The sick lay on straw mattresses. We were supplied with one barrel of drinking water and another barrel, which served as a toilet. Injured passengers were seated on our personal belongings. Suffocating in the sealed car, and in spite of threats from the S.S., we tried to open a small crack in one of the boards. We brought along with us some food supplies. We arrived at Theresienstadt after 24 hours. Jacobus' condition deteriorated rapidly "although a few good friends... occasionally brought him something extra, Mr. Kann died on October 7 1944."

Many Zionist friends attended Kann's funeral; among them was Rabbi Leo Beck, formerly chief Rabbi of Berlin. Kann's wife, Anna died on 28 April 1945 after suffering in the Ghetto hospital. Three of their five children perished in the Shoah, Maurits, the oldest son died in Oranienburg in March 1942; Johan, the third son, was sent in July 1942 to Auschwitz, and Jap, the youngest son was sent to the east.