Rabbi Moshe Alashqar (1466-1542)

Rabbi Moshe Alashqar (□□□□□□ □"□□□) was born in 1466 in Zamora, Spain. In 1492, when rabbi Moshe was 26 years old, the Jews were expelled from Spain. He suffered many tribulations. His ship sank and he was captured by pirates. At the end he managed to escape and established himself in Tunis, together with the celebrated Rabbi Abraham Zacuto. From Tunis he went to Greece and in 1522 he settled in Egypt where he was part of the rabbinical court of Rabbi David ibn Zimra (The Radbaz). He was one of the greatest rabbinical authorities of his time and as such he was consulted from all over the world. He wrote many books, some of which were never printed. One of his works is the Hasagot (=refutations), against the arguments of Rabbi Shem Tob ben Shem Tob in the sefer ha-emunot, who was critical of Maimonides' More Nebukhim. Rabbi Alashqar was a strong supporter of More Nebukhim and, in general of Maimonides ideas (You can find the Hasagot in teshuba □"□□. See below). In 1539 he established himself in Erets Israel. He died in 1542 and was buried in Yerushalayim.

His most famous book is Teshubot Maharam Alashqar, a book of 120 questions and answers on all topics. One example (Teshuba □"□). The original questions deals with a child born in the twilight between Friday and Shabbat. While analyzing the different opinions on the Halakhic ending of a day and the beginning of a new day, Rabbi Alashqar quotes the Talmud in Pesahim 94. The Talmud records a disagreement between the Jewish sages and the Greek sages. The Jewish sages—the Rabbis—originally thought that during the night the sun goes above the "arch of heaven", while the Greek sages believed that the sun went below earth. At the end, the Talmud concludes, the Rabbis admitted that the Greek sages were right, because at night oceans, rivers and lakes are warmer. The Tosafot and Nahmanides thought that since the Rabbis cannot be wrong what the Talmud meant to say is that the Rabbis admitted that the reasoning of the Greek sages was right, but not the facts (Actually, the opinion of Rabbenu Tam for whom the sheqi'a is 72 minutes long is based on the idea that at night the sun travels above the heavens arch. And precisely because the Rabbis admitted that the sun does not travel above heavens, Rabbi Alashqar rejects the sheqi'a of Rabenu Tam). Maimonides, on the other hand, asserted that we should understand the admission of the rabbis literally. The Rabbis reassessed their opinions based on the new found facts. For Maimonides this admission, far from undermining the Rabbis authority, is a sign of their integrity in the pursuit of the truth.

Rabbi Alashqar sided with Maimonides and he explained that the Rabbis are the supreme and uncontested authority in Jewish Law (like the

Supreme court of Justice) but in other areas (science, for example) where they did not receive a oral tradition, the Rabbis opinions were left open for debate.
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