Rabbi Ya'aqob Sasportas (1610-1698)

Rabbi Ya'aqob Sasportas was born in Oran, Algeria, in 1610. A prodigious child, at the age of eighteen he was elected as the Dayan of the city Tlemcen, also in Algeria. Later, he also served the communities of Fez and Sali in Morocco. In 1664 he was offered to be the rabbi of the newly established Portuguese community of London. According to the famous hebraist and poet David Franco Mendes, Rabbi Sasportas had accompanied Rabbi Menashe ben Israel to London in 1655 when the latter requested (and obtained) from Oliver Cromwell the permission for the Jews to reestablish themselves in England (In 1290, King Edward I issued an edict expelling all Jews from England. The expulsion edict remained in force until 1655). Rabbi Sasportas served as a rabbi in the Sephardic communities of Hamburg and Amsterdam, where he officiated also as the head of the Yeshiba Keter Tora and later on of the famous Yeshiba 'Ets Hayim.

Between 1665 and 1666 many (probably most) Jews believed that Shabbetai Zebi was the Messiah Jews were waiting for since the times of the destruction of the Bet haMiqdash. Althought it might be difficult for us today to believe, many Rabbis –Ashkenazim and especially Sephardim–naively supported Shabbetai Zebi's claims. The Sabbetaian movement, needless to say, caused tremendous damage, financial, political and physical to the Jews and it resulted in a great Hilul haShem. Some religious leaders were a little more cautious. The champion of the fight against the self proclaimed false Messiah was Rabbi Ya'akoq Sasportas (and Rabbi Moshe Hagez). Rabbi Sasportas denounced with very harsh words the falseness of Shabbetai Zebi. Especially by means of letters addressed to the Jews in Europe, North Africa and Middle East. In those letters he unmasked the impostor Mashiah and his entourage and warned the people against joining, supporting or believing in his claims. Rabbi Sasportas died in Amsterdam in 1698.

Portrait of rabbi Ya'aqob Sasportas, by Isaac Luttichuys

Some of his books are

- *Toledot Ya'aqob* (Amsterdam, 1652), an index of Biblical passages found in the Talmud Yerushalmi. Similar to Aaron Pesaro's "Toledot Aharon," which indexes the pesuqim of the Babylonian Talmud.
- *Ohel Ya'aoob* (1737), a book of rabbinical responsa, edited and prefaced by his son Abraham Sasportas;
- *Tsitsat nobel Tsebi* (published 1737), a four volumes book denouncing the heretic ideas and practices of Shabbetai Tsebi and his followers.

We present **here** the book : *Kitsur Tsitsat Nobel Tsebi*, a summary of the original book, composed by Rabbi Rafael Meldola (see **this**) published in Odessa, 1867.