# Maran Rabbi Yosef Caro (1488-1575)

Rabbi Yosef Caro (also Karo or Qaro) was born in Toledo, Spain in 1488. In 1492, at the age of four, he and his family were forced to leave Toledo due to the expulsion of the Jews from Spain. His family settled in Portugal. In 1497 the Jews were also expelled from Portugal. The Jews were invited to establish themselves in the Ottoman empire. The Caro family settled in the city of Constantinople. His father Epharim Caro was his first and most important teacher. Rabbi Yosef Caro's earliest work was the Kesef Mishne a commentary of Maimonide's Mihsne Torah, where he shows the Talmudic sources and the logic behind Maimonides rulings. His most famous book is the Shulhan 'arukh, considered the main Code of Jewish Law (see **here**)

In 1535 Rabbi Yosef Caro arrived to Tsefat (Safed, Israel). There he met Rabbi Ya'aqob Berab who planned to reinstitute the *semikha*, i.e., the formal rabbinical ordination that will enable Rabbis to legislate in all subjects and for all the Jewish people. The intention of Rabbi Berab was to establish a Bet-Din in Tsefat that will be the undisputed Halakhic voice, coming from Israel, for all Jews in the world. Solving thus the current situation in which each Jewish community had its particular and separate Halahkhic practice and customs.
Rabbi Berab ordained four Rabbis, one of the was Rabbi Yosef Caro. According to the Hida, rabbi Yosef Caro was ordained in addition by 200 rabbis from Erets Israel and the diaspora (The title Sephardic Jews have reserved for Rabbi Yosef Caro is "MARAN" which in Hebrew stands for: □□□□ □□□□□ □□□□□□ = "The one ordained by 200 Rabbis"). The Hida explained that when one follows the Shulhan 'Arukh is not following the opinion of one rabbi but of 200 Rabbis. At that time, 200 Rabbis represented the majority of the rabbis of the world.
This is the source of the extraordinary authority given to Rabbi Yosef Caro, and the main reason why the Shulhan 'arukh was accepted by all Jews as final and conclusive.

Maran Rabbi Yosef Caro died in Tsefat in 1575.

Some of his books are

- *Kesef Mishne* ( כסף משנה) a commentary to Maimonides Mishne Tora
- *Bet Yosef* ( בית יוסף), a monumental commentary on the Arba'a Turim from Rabbi Ya'aqob ben haRosh. This book was aimed to systematize the laws and customs of Judaism.
- *Shulhan 'Arukh* ( שולחן ערוך). Although it is a brief and practical summary of the Bet Yosef it is considered the unquestioned authority of the whole Jewish world.
- *Bedeq ha-Bayit* ( בדק הבית) additions and corrections to Beth Yosef.
- *Kelalei ha-Talmud* ( כללי התלמוד) a book on the methodology of the Talmud.

Click **here** to download the first edition of the Shulhan 'Arukh, Venezia, 1565