# Shulhan ‘arukh Venezia

Previously, I explained why rabbi Yosef Caro (1488-1575) wrote the shulhan ‘arukh and how did it happen that the shulhan ‘arukh became the most accepted Code of Jewish Law. We also saw that the shulhan ‘arukh was not meant to be an independent code of law but a compendium of the Halakhic conclusion of the Bet Yosef.

The shulhan ‘arukh was written as a short book to be studied monthly, in its entirety, as a way to constantly review all aspects of Jewish law. However, the shulhan ‘arukh was never used as a monthly compendium of Jewish Law. Why? One of the reasons is that except for the 1565 Venezia edition (published while Maran Rabbi Yosef Caro was alive!) the shulhan ‘arukh was systematical printed with a great number of glosses, amendments, critical commentaries and supercommentaries (= commentaries on previous commentaries) etc. So, when one approaches the study of the shulhan ‘arukh, it feels that one has to read all of its commentaries to comprehend the shulhan ‘arukh. The truth is that according to rabbi Yosef Caro, to understand the shulhan ‘arukh all a student needs is to know the Bet Yosef! The commentaries amend, oppose or confirm the rulings of the shulhan ‘arukh, but they should be studied as a supplementary reading. The ironic destiny of the shulhan ‘arukh “as a text” was perhaps the fault of those publishers, who instead of integrating the commentaries on the text of the shulhan ‘arukh, should have printed those commentaries as independent books, for advanced students, and leave the shulhan ‘arukh in its original form.

The fact is that since 1565 (to the best of my knowledge) the plain shulhan ‘arukh as it was originally conceived by Rabbi Yosef Caro was never (re)published. Today, since we have the text of the shulhan ‘arukh (with commentaries, etc.) online, it is relatively easy to re-produce the original shulhan ‘arukh. A few days ago I started to do just that. It is relatively simply and easy. And there are no costs involved.

I think it will be appropriate to recreate the 1565 Venezia Edition of the shulhan ‘arukh, a digital edition to begin

with. So far I have composed 15 chapters which I'm using to teach in my mornings shiur. Although this is a relatively easy job to do, more help is needed. So, if any of the readers would like to volunteer, all help will be welcomed. If you would like to help please email me to rabbibitton@yahoo.com (a minimal proficiency of rabbinical Hebrew is required) .

## Shulhan 'arukh Venezia 1565

Click **here** to see the first 15 chapters of the shulhan 'arukh Venezia.