



מכון בן־צבי לחקר קהילות ישראל במזרח
BEN-ZVI INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF JEWISH COMMUNITIES IN THE EAST
יד יצחק בן־צבי והאוניברסיטה העברית בירושלים

Call for Papers

Rabbi Joseph Karo: Contexts Near and Far

September 4 – 5, 2023

The Ben-Zvi Institute for the Study of Jewish Communities in the East

Five hundred years ago, in the city of Adrianople, R. Joseph Karo began the composition of his monumental work, *Beit Yosef*, which he completed several decades later in Safed. Since its publication, *Beit Yosef* has become the bedrock of halachic discussions. His later composition, the *Shulchan Aruch*, became a synonym for traditional Judaism as a whole, and Karo himself became one of the principal symbols of Sephardi Judaism from its inception until today. In the modern period, the figure of Karo was often instrumental in the shaping and articulation, by Rabbis, reformers, thinkers and scholars, of attitudes towards the Halakha, the Kabbala, Jewish political life and the relations between "tradition" and "progress". His figure was used to align oneself within the divisions typical of modern life, its internal contradictions and great controversies. Karo's extensive halakhic enterprise, as an author and a public figure, has made "maran" an emblematic figure of his time, and his work is often presented in the Jewish collective memory as a transitional point between the periods of the *Rishonim* and the *Ahronim*. Indeed, research in recent years has demonstrated that in many ways, the activity of Karo has defined and shaped vital aspects of Jewish modernity.

For over a decade, we have been witness to an extraordinary revival of scholarly interest in R. Joseph Karo; this awakening has produced a wealth of studies, transforming and deepening our knowledge and perception of Karo, and his role in shaping Jewish modernity. These scholarly endeavors have prompted a new appreciation of all aspects of Karo's activity, especially in regards to the broader contexts of his significance in his own time and throughout the generations.



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The Ben-Zvi Institute will dedicate a conference to the figure of Karo, with the aim of presenting the latest trends in contemporary research in a range of contexts and from a variety of viewpoints. The conference will focus on subjects related to Karo's life, his surroundings and activity, as well as his *oeuvre*, its sources and influence, from his lifetime up until today. Special attention will be given to the world in which Karo lived, and the various contexts – narrow and wide, local and global – in which his activity should be studied. Finally, the conference will explore the rekindled interest in Karo in its contemporary contexts and assess its significance.

We invite scholars to submit proposals for the conference. Please send proposals (in English or Hebrew, up to 250 words) and a CV by May 20th 2023 to mbz@ybz.org.il