

HALAKHAH, PIETISM, KABBALAH AND REVELATION IN SIXTEENTH CENTURY SAFED: A STUDY IN R. YOSEF KARO'S WORKS

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Safed of the sixteenth century was a religious and intellectual center in which halakhic, kabbalistic, and pietistic activities flourished, ordinarily without any conflicts. However, confrontations occasionally occurred between the juristic establishment and members of the other two socio-intellectual groups, who did not belong to the rabbinic leadership. In this article I examine the attitude of R. Yosef Karo, one of the most influential figures of sixteenth century Safed, regarding the relations and the hierarchy between these factions. The examination of Karo's case, more than others, enables us to understand the concepts prevalent in the rabbinic establishment of sixteenth century Safed in discussing these issues, because Karo was both a halakhic authority and a kabbalist with pietistic leanings, who also sought divine revelation.

As I demonstrate, Karo (like other figures in the rabbinic establishment of his day) confronted pietists and kabbalists who, in his opinion, deviated from the correct halakhic method of adjudication, either out of ignorance or individualistic scholarship. Karo avoided publishing his diary of revelations diary (*Maggid Mesharim*) because of concern that an incorrect interpretation of his halakhic method would justify reliance on divine entities.