

Joseph Albo

Collected Writings



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THE LIBRARY OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE

# JOSEPH ALBO

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EDITOR, SHIRA WEISS

*Joseph Albo*  
*Collected Writings*

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Introductions and original translation of the *Responsum* by  
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*Sefer ha'Iqqarim, Book of Principles*, translation by Isaac Husik  
© The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1929

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## Publisher's Preface

*"Albo encouraged Jews to investigate divine law by arguing that just as it is necessary for a doctor to know the principles of medicine, so too, a religious individual should understand its laws... The accessible style in which [he] wrote his philosophical homilies conveyed theological doctrine to a wide audience and contributed to the achievement of his goal."*

Shira Weiss

Living through one of the darkest chapters in Jewish history, Joseph Albo used his status as a leading rabbi and preacher during the height of the Spanish inquisition to inspire his followers and preserve and cement Jewish commitment to its tradition. Known chiefly for his authorship of the enduring *Sefer ha'Iqqarim*, he also participated in the Tortosa Disputation. Albo, like so many before and after him, did not despair in the face of persecution and death, instead reviving and strengthened the Jewish spirit for centuries to come. It is our honor to publish his *Collected Works* at a time when his courage and faith serves as an example of how to confront the growing threat of antisemitism around the world, reminding us of our timeless strength and creativity.

We thank Dr. Shira Weiss for her exhaustive work editing this volume and writing the insightful and comprehensive introduction, placing Joseph Albo next to his teacher Hasdai Crescas in the growing *Library of the Jewish People*.

We also thank Uri Bollag, our Managing Editor; Tani Bayer for designing the covers; Tomi Mager for creating the typography; and Rachel Miskin and Ruth Pepperman for copyediting the works.

We hope that this volume serves as a reminder of the Jewish People's ability to overcome any challenge, especially when it is united in its commitment to uphold the enduring Jewish values.

Matthew Miller, Publisher  
Library of the Jewish People  
2025

## Timeline

Joseph Albo	Jewish Context	Global Context
1303		The Knights Templars withdraw from the Island of Arwad (off the coast of Syria in present day), marking the end of last Crusader foothold in the Middle East.
1330		Birth of John Wycliffe, British theologian and philosopher, and precursor of Protestantism.
1337		Beginning of The Hundred Years' War, which rages, off and on, across Europe. It is waged by England and its allies against France and its allies. Although Spain is not directly involved, the war forms the backdrop of European political and commercial life during this period.
1340	Hasdai Crescas is born in Barcelona, the capital of Aragon. He will go on to be the major teacher of Albo.  His works include <i>Or HaShem</i> (The Light of the Lord) and <i>The Refutation of the Christian Principles</i> .	
1343	R. Yacob ben Asher, known as the <i>Ba'al haTurim</i> , dies in Toledo. His <i>Arba'ah Turim</i> is a hugely influential halakhic code that forms the basis for the even more influential <i>Shulḥan Arukh</i> .  King Kazimir III (the Great) invites the persecuted Jews of Western Europe to settle in Poland.	"The Black Death" (bubonic plague) kills about one third of the population of Europe between 1343 and 1351.