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Bal Tashchit : the Jewish prohibition against needless destruction

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BAL TASHCHIT:
THE JEWISH PROHIBITION AGAINST NEEDLESS
DESTRUCTION

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BAL TASHCHIT:

THE JEWISH PROHIBITION AGAINST NEEDLESS DESTRUCTION

Proefschrift

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aan de Universiteit Leiden,
op gezag van de Rector Magnificus
prof. mr P.F. van der Heijden,
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het College voor Promoties
te verdedigen op dinsdag 1 december 2009
klokke 15:00 uur

door

Keith A. Wolff

geboren te Fort Lauderdale (Verenigde Staten)
in 1957

Promotiecommissie

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To my wife, our children, and our parents

Preface

This is an interdisciplinary thesis. The second and third chapters focus on classic Jewish texts, commentary and legal responsa, including the original Hebrew and Aramaic, along with translations into English. The remainder of the thesis seeks to integrate principles derived from these Jewish sources with contemporary Western thought, particularly on what might be called 'environmental' themes. To facilitate this synthesis, we will follow a number of conventions as listed below.

1. In order to clearly distinguish between different sources and disciplines, the names of quoted authors will be preceded by a brief identifying 'title' such as "physicist" or "economist". Along these lines, the names of Rabbinic authorities will be preceded by: "R."
2. Scriptural citations follow the translation of *The Holy Scriptures* by Koren Publishers, Jerusalem (2000) unless otherwise noted.
3. Non-scriptural citations (for example, from the Mishna, Talmud, Midrash, and Rabbinic Responsa) are translated by the author unless otherwise noted.
4. Where Hebrew words are transliterated into English, they are spelled according to the following convention:
 - **ch** (guttural *kh* sound) for the Hebrew letters ח and כּ
 - **tz** for Hebrew letter צ
 - **y** for Hebrew letter י
 - **k** for the Hebrew letter ק
 - **c** for the Hebrew letter ס
5. The Jewish texts use many different names for "God", which can be very confusing. For the sake of consistency, I will use the term "Creator" to refer to: "God", "G-d", the "Lord", the "Holy One Blessed be He", etc, unless I am directly quoting from a published translation.
6. Direct quotations from another publication are written in *italics*. Within a quote, *words are emphasized by writing them in standard (Roman) script*.
7. For easy access to notes, I have provided footnotes on the same page as the reference, rather than endnotes. Where a non-English text is referenced in the footnotes, the title is either transliterated into English, or in some cases, translated into English. The language of the text is indicated in the Bibliography at the end of the thesis.
8. A guide to terms and abbreviations is provided at the end of the thesis.

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