

Israel's leading environmentalist headlines Klutznick-Harris Symposium

by **LEONARD GREENSPOON**

Holder of the Klutznick Chair in Jewish Civilization at Creighton University

Who better than Dr. Alon Tal -- widely recognized as Israel's leading environmentalist -- to serve as keynote presenter for this fall's Klutznick-Harris Symposium on Jews and the Environment?

His presentation -- "What Makes Jewish Environmentalism Jewish?" -- will take place on, **Sunday, Oct. 28, 7:30 p.m.**, at the Jewish Community Center, topping off the first of two days of activities associated with this 20th installment of the Symposium.

Tal's academic credentials are impressive: a B.A., with honors, in Political Science from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, a law degree from the Hebrew University's Law Faculty, and an M.S. and doctorate in Environmental Health Policy from the Harvard School of Public Health.

His list of academic and public positions is equally prestigious, including academic posts in the United States, New Zealand, and Israel, before assuming his present teaching and research responsibilities at the Blaustein Institutes for Desert Research, at Ben Gurion University.

Always active in the public sphere as well, Tal has been associated with the Israel Union of Environmental Defense, the Arava Institute for Environmental Studies, and presently serves as chair of the International Board of Directors of the Land Development Committee for the Jewish National Fund, which has wide oversight of environmental issues and impact on development within Israel. He also represents Israel on a number of regional and international commissions and at the



Dr. Alon Tal

United Nations.

Tal is the author of numerous books -- including *Israel: An Environmental History*, *Speaking of Earth: Environmental Speeches that Moved the Earth*, and *Pollution in a Promised Land*, as well as articles, and reports. Widely sought after as a speaker, Tal is the recipient of major awards, including the Charles Bronfman Humanitarian Prize in 2005. It was this award that attracted the attention of Steve Riekens, who initially recommended that Tal be invited to the Symposium.

There is also a personal side to Tal. As he himself has written, "I probably became an environmentalist growing up between dinner table conversations with my father, who ran EPA analytical laboratories during the 1970s, and the cross-country running trails and white water canoeing streams of rural North Carolina. Like many active members of Young Judaea and its summer camps, I was inspired to make Aliyah on my 20th birthday. Thirty-three days later, I joined the IDF paratroopers." Astonished by the proliferation of litter and general environmental conditions he saw across the country (and in Lebanon) during this military service, he decided to pursue a career in environmental studies.

Moreover, Tal is no stranger to Nebraska. Much of his doctoral research was done with the nutrient control program in the Central Platte Natural Resource District, where he interviewed and met with many of the farmers there. Tal, like a number of other Symposium participants (and many Omaha residents), is an avid bike rider. He and his wife have three daughters.

The Symposium, consisting of 13 presentations in addition to Tal's, will begin at the JCC on **Sunday, Oct. 28, 10:30 a.m.** Sessions will continue until 5 p.m. Tal's keynote address will be followed by a dessert reception. Monday's presentations, Oct. 29, 8:45 a.m. until 2 p.m., will take place at the Skutt Student Center on the Creighton University Campus.

All events are free and open to the public. For further information, please contact Fran Minear at 280.2303 or fminear@creighton.edu.