

# Praying hard to make the rain fall

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**Rabbis, imams and priests gather to pray for the end of seven-year drought in a valley near Jerusalem.**



It's been said that everyone talks about the weather, but no one does anything about it.

Well, seven years of drought in the Holy Land has been so bad that it has brought together Muslim, Christian and Jewish clerics to offer prayers for rain.

The rainy season should have begun over a month ago, but the skies remain blue on this November afternoon. These devout men believe that now more than ever is the time for divine intervention.

At a spring named Ein Heniya in the Valley of the Ghosts that separates Jerusalem from the Bethlehem hills, the clerics gathered on Thursday afternoon for an unusual prayer session. They decided to put aside their differences and, as followers of one God, united their prayers for the much-needed rain.

“Look up, it’s dry, dry,” said Rabbi Menachem Froman, an Orthodox rabbi from the Tekoa settlement near Bethlehem, who has close ties with Palestinian religious leaders.

“Before anything else, to live we need rain. If there isn’t any rain, there won’t be any Jews or Muslims or Christians here.”

“According to our traditions, the Jewish and the Islam, rain is due to the deeds of man, and if we make any step of peace between us, perhaps that will open the treasures of the skies and rain will fall,” Froman told The Media Line.

The spring is located a few hundred meters from an IDF checkpoint, and is sort of a no-man’s land. But its location on the fringes of Israel and the Palestinian Authority have allowed it to serve more as an everyman’s land, where Jews and Arabs can gather away from the watchful eyes of the security forces.

Still, there were some who tried to turn the prayer into a political event. A Palestinian man from the nearby village of Walaje began yelling that he was being oppressed and occupied when two curious border policemen stopped by to see what all the fuss was about.

After a quick word with one of the rabbis, the policemen left and the prayers began.

“I came here with my Jewish and Muslim brothers to pray that God has mercy on us and bestows blessings and rain on this holy land,” Rev. Issa Elias Musleh, spokesman for the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, told The Media Line.

“God willing, our prayers will reach God, who will grant us all our wishes – for he is capable for changing all things. I hope everyone who supports peace will take this union of clerics into consideration,” Musleh said.

After declarations of unity, the three groups broke off to pray separately. About 20 Jews gathered around a dry pool, where they recited the special prayer for rain. It is required to fast for the day, if one recited this prayer.

Musleh stepped on a large boulder closer to the spring and began his Christian prayer, his followers nearby.

The Muslims, watching curiously at the Israelis praying – perhaps seeing this Jewish worship for the first time – took to higher ground. When the Jewish prayers were over, they lined up in two rows behind an imam and began their salat al-matar, or rain prayer.

“God likes unity, and when people make unity on the earth it is very good, and Allah likes this kind of life. Allah wants people not to quarrel with each other because of religion.

Because Allah sent religion to make peace, not to make war,” Sheikh Abdel Najib, mufti of the Bethlehem area, told The Media Line. “We hope that God will be happy.”

Amid the throng of local and international television crews and journalists, American tourist Micah Rosenblatt watched, enthralled.

“I wanted to be part of something where everyone is coming together for a common cause, because we all love this land and we are all a part of it, and so we want to work together to, like, bring some goodness here, you know,” said Rosenblatt, a Jewish man from Florida who is staying in Tekoa.

Looking up at the cloudless sky, he wondered: “Who knows? Maybe the prayers will change something.

You never know. You never know what can happen,” he said.

Froman said God was looking down from above.

“I believe that if God sees his children working together, the heavens will open and not only will rain come down, but so will peace,” Froman said.