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SENIORS

JEWISH NEWS

of Greater Phoenix



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Praying for peace

Valley Jews join national service via telephone

BARRY COHEN

Editor

[E-MAIL](#)

A minyan of 40 local Jews joined thousands of others April 21 in lower Manhattan - via a conference call - to recite psalms and prayers for peace and security in Israel.

"When the Jewish people confront tribulation or tragedy, the Torah obligates us to pray. And when we pray, pray together," said Rabbi Zvi Holland of the Phoenix Community Kollel, citing a rabbinical commentary by Moshe ben Maimon.

Young Israel of Phoenix and the Phoenix Community Kollel co-sponsored the local gathering, one of 35 across North America. Twelve groups linked via conference call with a central prayer gathering in Manhattan of 50,000 people.

National event sponsors included Agudath Israel of America, the National Council of Young Israel, the Orthodox Union, and the Rabbinical Council of America.

The 90-minute worship service was "the largest unified recitations of psalms in modern history," said Chanie Friedman, director of public relations for Agudath Israel.

Psalms were read responsively, with a prayer leader in Manhattan reading one verse and the participants in New York and linked by phone reading the next verse, said Rabbi Chaim Silver of Young Israel.

"It felt like we were literally there, participants in the prayer service," he said. "The phone hookup worked wonderfully."

The worship service combined the recitation of psalms with sections of Selichot (special penitential prayers) and Yom Kippur liturgy, said Holland.

"This is the form of worship thousands of years old, recited during times of difficulty for our people, from the Crusades to the Holocaust," he explained.

Traditional psalms paired with distress, misfortune and faith, among other themes, were selected, he said.

"Through the recitation of psalms, we connect with God," said Silver. "Prayer is building

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and forging a relationship with God ... and psalms are the medium of that connection."

"I wanted to take part in the event because this is what we do in a time of need," Silver explained. A war is being fought not just against Israel but also against the Jewish people. A way to fight back is through prayer, he said.

When a large community prays together, "it increases the sense of validity and strength of the prayers," noted Holland. "The more worshippers there are, the more glorious it is for God."

Both Silver and Holland learned about the one-time event through mass e-mail.

Additional information provided by Amy Sara Clark of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. Contact the writer at barry_cohen@jewishaz.com.

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