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## Rosh Hashana storms set September rain record

By **EHUD ZION WALDOKS**

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The storms over Rosh Hashana set a new rainfall record for September, the Water Authority said on Sunday night, as what fell in just two days equaled the average total for September and October.

Thirty to 40 millimeters fell on the North, with up to 60 mm. reported on the northern Golan Heights.

Ten millimeters fell on Lake Kinneret directly. While the water level didn't actually rise, because water is pumped out of the Kinneret at higher rates on weekends as electricity is cheaper, it was the equivalent of a rise in the water level, which otherwise would have gone down by a centimeter.

Without a really good year of rain, however, the country will reach the black lines in all three natural sources of water - Lake Kinneret, the coastal aquifer and the mountain aquifer - by late November or early December, Water Authority spokesman Uri Schor told *The Jerusalem Post* on Sunday night.



Palestinians cover the heads with praying carpets to avoid the rain, at the entrance of the Al Aqsa Mosque Compound, during the first day of Eid al-Fitr, in Jerusalem's Old City, Sunday.  
Photo: AP

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The black lines indicate the point below which rapid and irreversible damage will be done to the reservoirs.

Looking to the forecast for the coming winter, the Pacific Ocean phenomenon known as El Nino could bring Israel copious amounts of rain, but it could also cause an even more severe drought year than the five that have plagued the country since 2004, Schor told the *Post*.

Despite being on the other side of the world, El Nino could still have a great impact on rainfall patterns.

"We're on the rim of the El Nino effect and no one knows what it will bring. It could conceivably bring a lot of rain, but it could also bring about a severe drought year. It's clear what we're all hoping for," he said.

Responding to five consecutive drought years and data that indicates precipitation rates in the region may have dropped off because of climate change, the government has pushed an ambitious plan to build desalination plants. Two are already functioning and one more is expected to come on line later this year. Another two are supposed to be built in the coming years.

However, the government has been known to drastically cut back the desalination project budget after a heavy rainfall year. Such behavior, for instance, set back the project in 2004 by more than five years because that winter was a particularly rainy one.

Despite the inclement weather, 350,000 people visited the national parks, nature reserves and other sites of the National Parks Authority and the Jewish National Fund over the long weekend. Popular sites included the Hula Valley to see the migrating birds the Sataf spring, Masada and Ein Gedi.

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