For the first time since the destruction of the Second Temple…

The days of Sukkot were days of a special happiness in the Bet haMiqdash (Temple of Jerusalem). In addition to the Biblical commandment of taking the four species (□□□□□□ □□□□□), there were two other Mitsvot fulfilled in the Temple. These two practices are part of what is called "Halakha leMoshe miSinai", religious traditions taught to Moses at Mount Sinai, with no explicit Scriptural source. One of them was *nisukh hamayim* (lit. water libation) also known as the ceremony of pouring water on the altar.

The Rabbis described the great joy of this ceremony:

"Whoever has not seen the celebration of the water libation has never experienced the feeling of true joy. Great lamps of gold were hoisted, with four golden bowls at the top of each lamp. Four young priests would climb to the top, carrying immense oil jugs with which they would fill the bowls. Once lighted, there was not a courtyard in all of Jerusalem that did not glow with the light that emanated from the celebration in the Temple. Special balconies were constructed to enable the righteous women of Israel to watch the wise men of the Sanhedrin as they danced. As the people sang, the righteous and pious men would dance before them while juggling flaming torches. The levites, standing on the fifteen steps that descend from the Court of Israel to the Women's Court, played on lyres, harps, trumpets and many other instruments. Two priests who blew silver trumpets [these were real trumpets or □□□□□□□ not shofarot, as you will see in the video below] stood at the top of the stairs on either side of the entrance to the great gate of the Court.

(Tractate Sukkah, Chapter 5)

All this was done to honor the commandment of the water libation. At dawn, the assembly proceeded with melody and song to the spring of Shiloach, at the foot of the walls of Jerusalem. One priest carried with him a special golden decanter and filled it with the sparkling spring water. Then the congregation ascended again to the Temple, led by the priest who bore the golden vessel. Arriving at the Temple, he brought the decanter up to the altar, and poured the water into the silver cup at its corner.

This ceremony is connected to the rainfall of the coming year, and it was accompanied by prayers for blessing on the earth and its produce.

Adapted from "The Temple Institute" (see the complete article with illustrations here)

For the first time since the destruction of the Second Temple, the ceremony of pouring of water was reenacted in Yerushalayim. This event took place in Jerusalem, yesterday, 18th of Tishri.