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First of all, let me congratulate you!

You didn't panic over that last passage which was exceedingly difficult.

You came back!

Hurray for you!

Some things in Talmud are harder than others. How do you cope? Get out of a tough passage what you can and don't becomes obsessed with nailing down every detail. You can always come back to it, later. Roll with the punches and if you feel like you're drowning, remember that there is a rotating rhythm in the Talmud that general takes you from something hard to something easy. That's going to happen now as the Mishnah continues with a story about a fast day. This material is still not terribly easy, but we'll get through it together. As always, if you feel you're sinking, e mail me directly for help.

(By the way, our e-mail group continues to grow and thrive and we welcome you into it at any time. Many of our current participants checked the website without joining for several weeks and then decided to find out what they've been missing in the e-mail group. Even if you're just "lurking" here...we're glad to have you!)

Mishnah Taanit 2:5, Bavli 15b, Steinsaltz, Volume 14, p. 7:

(This week, I'm including Rabbi Steinsaltz's commentary, printed in italics, which may make this easier to understand.)

An incident [occurred] in the days of Rabbi Halafta and Rabbi Hananya ben Teradyon, that someone passed before the ark and finished the entire blessing, and they did not answer after him, "Amen". *Rather, they said: "Blessed is the name of His glorious majesty for ever and ever," the customary response to a blessing recited in the Temple.*

The synagogue attendant then proclaimed: "Sound a tekiah, priests, sound a tekiah."

The prayer leader then continued: "He who answered Abraham on Mount Moriah, He will answer you and will hearken unto the sound of your crying [on] this day," after which the priests sounded the trumpets. The prayer leader then recited the next blessing, Zichronot, and when he finished, the synagogue attendant proclaimed: "Sound a teruah, sons of Aaron, sound a teruah."

The prayer leader continued: "He who answered our forefathers at the Red Sea, He will answer you and will hearken unto the sound of your crying [on] this day," after which the trumpets were sounded. The same applied to each of the other special blessings recited on account of the fast--the prayer leader would complete the blessing, the synagogue attendant would announce that the priests were to sound the trumpets, the prayer leader would entreat God to answer His people's cries as He had done in Biblical times, and the trumpets would be sounded.

And when the matter of the practices adopted by Rabbi Halafta and Rabbi Hananya ben Teradyon came before the Sages, they said: We would not act this way except in the days of the Temple, when we entered through the Eastern Gate and on the Temple Mount."

Commentary

First of all, you can see what a great gift Rabbi Steinsaltz's commentary is. He really fills in the blanks for you! And this is just the commentary he puts in the text itself. There's more around the rest of the page. No, I do not receive a commission on his books. I came to Talmud through his Hebrew translation and am convinced that his English translation can be the way into the Talmud for many non-Hebrew speakers. My goal is global Talmud because I think

it is one of the greatest tools we have for intellectual and spiritual enlightenment. That is, after all, why I spend all this time teaching you! It's *nachus* (soul pleasure) in its purest form! For those of you who might have trouble finding copies of the Steinsaltz Talmud, feel free to e-mail me and I can suggest to you some "mail-order" sources for these books.

The text with Rabbi Steinsaltz's commentary should be pretty self-explanatory. So let's move right on to the questions:

Discussion Questions:

- 1.** The big issue in this mishnah is whether we can do things the way they did them in the Temple now that the Temple has been destroyed. What do you think? Should we mine the Talmud for Temple traditions that might enrich our worship now? Or should everything that was in the Temple remain locked away until the Messianic era?
- 2.** A story in the Mishnah is a relatively rare thing. Here, the anonymous majority of sages disagree with what Rabbi Halafta and Rabbi Hananya ben Teradyon did. Yet, there must have been some tension about the issue or the story wouldn't have been included. We saw this same phenomenon several weeks ago in the mishnah story about [Honi](#). Is there a pattern here? What is the similarity between this story and the story of Honi?
- 3.** Let's posit that we're not going to say the "Temple" response to a prayer or blow the shofar. What would be the 1990's response? What would be the 1990's dramatic sound? Certainly, a century ago, it would have been an organ (hence all those Reform synagogues with organs in them). Would we do a laser light show? Show a video?

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