In Lev. xxiv 10-14, 23, the son of an Israelite mother and an Egyptian father is involved in an altercation with an Israelite. In the course of the fight, the half-Israelite commits an offense which leads to his death by stoning. His crime is described in the following terms: wyqb ... 't hsm wyqll (v. 11). Great ambiguity exists about the nature of the offense which is evidenced in the various translations of the phrase: “blasphemed the Name, and cursed” (RSTI), “blasphemed the name and cursed it” (UB), “uttered the Holy Name in blasphemy” (NEB), and “pronounced the Name in blasphemy” (new JPS).

Part of the ambiguity rests in the fact that v. 11 seems to imply that the offender committed two separate acts: (1) wyqb ... 't hsm, and (2) yqll. yqb apparently comes from nqb (cp. w'nqeqb in v. 16), with the meaning “to pronounce”, while hsm refers to the...
tetragrammaton.\textsuperscript{5} qll means ‘to curse’, or more specifically, in the case of Lev. xxiv 11, ‘to call for the destruction of someone or something’.\textsuperscript{6}

A talmudic interpretation of this text which seems not to have been noticed by modern interpreters can both clarify the nature of the crime and how the text should be translated. The Talmud preserves an understanding of this verse which, first of all, instead of considering nqâb and qll as describing two separate acts, implies that they are rather two aspects of one act. M. Sanhedrin VII 5 makes it clear that pronouncing the Name is against the law: ‘‘The blasphemer’ is not culpable unless he pronounces the Name itself.’\textsuperscript{7} In addition, however, in its description of trials for those accused of blasphemy, the Talmud gives an interpretation of what it considers to be an act parallel to what occurred in Lev. xxiv 11. In a trial of a person suspected of blasphemy, the examiners asked those who witnessed the alleged offense if they had heard the accused say, ‘‘May Jose smite Jose’’ (‘‘Jose’’ being substituted for ‘‘Yahweh’’ because of the prohibition against saying the Name). If the witnesses answered affirmatively, then, in private, the examiners asked the chief witness to say exactly what he had heard. If the witness answered that the accused had said, ‘‘May Yahweh smite Yahweh’’, and the other witnesses agreed, the judges then pronounced the sentence of death by stoning. The Gemara further explains that ‘‘[The blasphemer is not punished] unless he ‘blesses’ [i.e., curses] the Name, by the Name.’\textsuperscript{8}

This interpretation of blasphemy allows a more precise description of what occurred in Lev. xxiv. The phrase that an alleged blasphemer was accused of saying, ‘‘May Yahweh smite Yahweh’’, conforms to the description of the offense in Lev. xxiv 11; the Name is pronounced, and a curse is stated. Yet, it was not merely the pronouncing of the Name nor cursing that warranted such severe punishment. Instead, the offender committed both deeds in one act by saying something similar to ‘‘May Yahweh smite Yahweh’’, i.e., he called for the destruction of Yahweh in the name of Yahweh.\textsuperscript{9} A possible translation based on the understanding outlined above might be, ‘‘he pronounced the Name, cursing (Yahweh)’’.\textsuperscript{10}

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