

Breast-Feeding Practices in Biblical Israel and in Old Babylonian Mesopotamia

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It has been taken almost for granted that ancient Israel was characterized by large families and that ancient Israelite women were valued in direct proportion to the number of children they bore. Texts such as 1 Sam. 1:8, in which Elkanah asks his beloved wife Hannah, "Do you not prefer me to ten sons?" and Genesis 29–30, in which Leah attempts unsuccessfully to become Jacob's favorite wife by bearing him the most children (six sons and one daughter), seem to be treated as the exceptions that prove the rule.¹

My interest in this topic arose in the course of my preparing for publishing my article, "The Role of Women in the Israelite Cult According to the Priestly Code," in *Judaic Perspectives on Ancient Israel*, ed. Jacob Neusner, B. A. Levine, and E. Frerichs (Philadelphia, 1987). In my very last conversation with my mentor, Prof. Moshe Held, of blessed memory, just three days before his untimely death, he encouraged me to pursue this project. For this reason I felt it especially appropriate to dedicate this paper to Prof. Held in gratitude for his Torah and for his many kindnesses on my behalf. Earlier versions of this study were presented as lectures at the Swedish Theological Institute in Jerusalem in November 1984, at the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies in August 1985, and at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America in February 1986. For their encouragement and bibliographical suggestions I am especially grateful to Prof. John Knodel of the Population Studies Center of the University of Michigan and Prof. Jane Menken of the Office of Population Research at Princeton University, to my teacher Prof. Yochanan Muffs of the Jewish Theological Seminary, to my colleagues at Ben-Gurion University, Prof. Mordechai Cogan and Dr. Isaac Gilead, and to the editors of *JANES*. A sabbatical generously provided by Ben-Gurion University of the Negev combined with appointments as Visiting Scholar in the Department of Near Eastern Languages & Literatures at the University of Chicago and Visiting Professor at Spertus College of Judaica afforded me the opportunity to discuss this project with Prof. Martha Roth of the University of Chicago and Prof. Rivkah Harris of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. I am especially grateful to these two scholars for their constructive criticism of earlier formulations of the thesis presented herein. For making available to me the varied kinds of bibliographical materials quoted below I record my thanks to the library staffs of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and the Israel Institute of the History of Medicine in Jerusalem. For help in locating the pictorial illustrations I am most grateful to Dr. Zefira Gitay. Finally, I record my thanks to three experts in the field of natural nursing for their encouraging me to investigate this topic: Robert Mendelsohn, M.D., may his memory be for a blessing, and, may they be distinguished for life, Judy Knopf, and אחרונה אחרונה חביבה Judith Friedman Gruber, the perfect helpmeet, whose success both as the mother of our five children and as a certified counselor of the La Leche League had more than a little to do with my coming up with this topic.

1 See Carol Meyers, "The Roots of Restriction: Women in Early Israel," *BA* 41 (1978), 91–103; Johannes Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture* (London, 1963), 3–4:156–58; John Otwell, *And Sarah Laughed*

However, almost forty years ago Hilma Granqvist made the following observations in her classic anthropological study, *Child Problems Among the Arabs*:

¹ The assumption that the women [of ancient Israel] had many children has become a dogma, which may be difficult to alter. My skepticism in this respect is however due to my observation that the women in the Bible had very few children.²

... that Jacob really required four wives to present him with thirteen children cannot be considered impressive.³

I did not succeed in finding [in the Hebrew Bible] any woman with a great many children. Even when the absolute number of them was pleasingly great in a family, it may not have been to the credit of any single woman. [E.g.], Rehoboam [had] 28 sons and 60 daughters, 18 wives and 60 concubines. One wife had 3 sons, another had 4 sons. . . . if the remaining 81 children are equally divided among the other 76 wives and concubines, only 5 of them could have had 2 children each, while the other 71 women could have had only one child each.⁴

King Rehoboam's son Abijah again had 14 wives and 22 sons and 16 daughters, not even an average of 3 children per wife.⁵

On the basis of these and other data Granqvist concluded:

I do not wish to go to the opposite extreme and believe that a wife generally had only one son, yet there are so many important facts indicating that a woman had few children, that the onus of proof must fall on those who maintain that the ideal aimed at was definitely numerous children. They must at least explain how it is that such a great difference exists between the ideal and reality, as [the latter is] expressed in genealogical tables. It is not said that these numbers always correspond to actual conditions, especially those of ancient times. What they say about the Patriarchs' ages shows that they were not afraid of big numbers. If the ideal had really been a wife with many children, tradition and history would certainly have preserved the names of specially prolific women.⁶

R. V. Short in his classic study, "Breast Feeding," pointed out that in contemporary Third World agricultural societies where babies are nursed by their mothers on demand throughout the day and night mean lactational amenorrhea (i.e., suppression of the menses as a consequence of nursing a baby) is eighteen and one half months.⁷

(Philadelphia, 1977), 65-66; Janice Nunnally-Cox, *Foremothers* (New York, 1981), 5-20, 60-61; contrast Judith Ochshorn, *The Female Experience and the Nature of the Divine* (Bloomington, 1981), 197-99.

² (Helsinki/Copenhagen, 1950), 52. Cf. the similar remarks concerning the medieval European family in Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (London, 1977), 63: "It is commonly supposed that pre-modern homes were swarming with children. This is an allusion derived from a number of striking but in fact exceptional examples."

³ Granqvist, *Child Problems*, 53.

⁴ Loc cit.; the Biblical source is 2 Chr. 11:18-21.

⁵ Loc cit.; the Biblical source is 2 Chr. 13:21.

⁶ Ibid., 55. Stone, *The Family*, 63, points out that "the average number of children born to one wife was . . . only four or less in upper class England" in the 16th c. I. M. Diakanoff, "Extended Families in Old Babylonian Ur," *ZA* 75 (1985), 65, points out that "the usual medium size of an individual (nuclear) family" in ancient Mesopotamia was "five to six persons"; so also Michael John Desrochers, "Aspects of the Structure of Dilbat during the Old Babylonian Period" (Ph.D. dissertation, UCLA, 1978), 355; Susan Jane Bridges, "The Mesaq Archive: A Study of Sargonic Society and Economy" (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1981) 1:36; with respect to the Sumerians see now also Valerie A. Fildes, *Breasts, Bottles and Babies* (Edinburgh, 1986), 3.

⁷ *Scientific American* 250/4 (April 1984), 23-29; see now J.-P. Habicht, J. Davanzo, W. P. Butz, and L. Meyers, "The Contraceptive Role of Breast Feeding," *Population Studies* 39 (1985), 213: "Empirical research has established that breast feeding postpones the return of ovulation after birth; that is, it lengthens the period of postpartum anovulation and amenorrhea longer than does supplemented breast feeding.



Fig. 1. Woman nursing child, Larsa 7th–6th c. B.C.E.; from A. Parrot, *The Arts of Assyria* (New York, 1961), 251; reproduced by permission of the Iraqi Museum, Baghdad.

He observed that the average woman in such a society will produce four children.⁸ This figure corresponds to what Granqvist noted for ancient Israelite women. Therefore, I suggest that a significant factor leading to the low fertility of ancient Israelite women was their nursing their babies for as long as three years.⁹

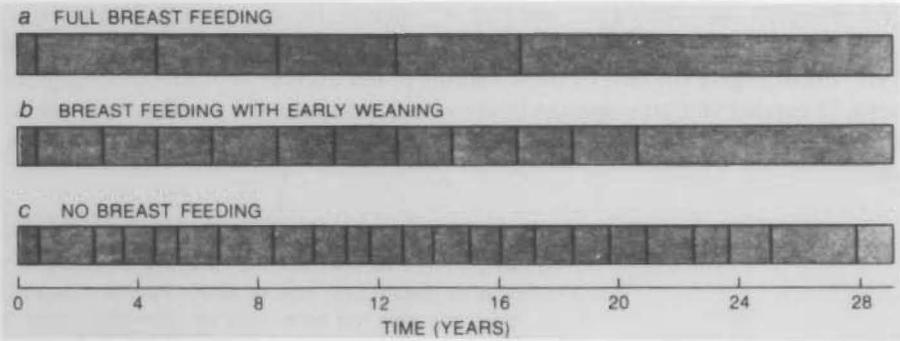
Hence, birth intervals are longer and fertility reduced in many populations where women practice intensive and lengthy breast feeding.”

8 Short, “Breast Feeding,” 23–29; cf. Habicht et al., “Contraceptive Role,” 213: “Both empirical estimates and simulations of birth interval dynamics suggest that, in less developed countries, this contraceptive effect of breast feeding is substantial. In these populations, breast feeding may well delay or prevent more births than do all the contraceptives supplied by family planning programs.”

9 So already Granqvist, *Child Problems*, 79.



Fig. 2. Woman nursing child from the palace of Azitawadda at (modern) Karatepe, Asia Minor, 8th c. B.C.E.; from E. Akurgal, *The Art of the Hittites* (London, 1962) pl. 150; reproduced by permission of Hirmer Verlag, Munich.



BIRTH INTERVALS for three types of breast feeding in the absence of contraceptives are charted. Women of the !Kung hunter-gatherer people in Africa (a) nurse their babies frequently for three or four years, achieving a mean birth interval of 4.1 years and a mean of 4.7 live births during a woman's reproductive life. The Hutterites of North America (b), who nurse on a rigid schedule, start giving the infant supplemental food a few months after birth and wean it within a year, have a mean birth interval of two years and a mean of 10.6 live births. A woman in the United Kingdom (c) who never nursed her babies and whose lactation was suppressed with stilbestrol or ethinyl estradiol after each delivery had a mean birth interval of 1.3 years.

Fig. 3. Table of child-spacing; from R. V. Short, "Breast Feeding," *Scientific American* 250/4 (April 1984), 36; reproduced by permission, copyright © 1984 by Scientific American, Inc. All rights reserved.

The physiological mechanism responsible for the infertility of women who nurse their babies on demand and who do not supply their babies with additional food or drink is as follows: The suckling by the infant results in neural input from the nipple to the hypothalamus. The result is "the release of beta endorphin, which is thought to suppress the discharge of hypothalamic gonadotrophin-releasing hormone. The result is a decreased secretion of luteinizing hormone and therefore a failure of ovulation."¹⁰ Hence, in an experiment in Edinburgh, Scotland bottle-feeding women resumed menstruation an average of eight weeks after delivery and began to ovulate after eleven weeks while breast-feeding mothers began to menstruate an average of thirty-three weeks after delivery and to ovulate thirty-six weeks after delivery.¹¹

It has been observed that the !Kung of the Kalahari desert in southern Africa use no modern contraception, have no fertility regulating practices such as late marriage or taboo on intercourse during lactation, and they do not practice infanticide. They have an average completed family size of 4.7 children and a mean birth interval of 4.1 years. "That these long birth intervals are achieved by breast-feeding is evident from the fact that if the infant dies and lactation ceases the mother is soon pregnant again."¹² "Studies have shown that the mother carries the infant wherever she goes and that it sleeps beside her at night. The infant suckles frequently during the day (about four times per hour) although each feeding lasts for only a minute or two."¹³

¹⁰ Short, "Breast Feeding," 24; for additional details and extensive literature see Habicht et al., "Contraceptive Role," 214-15.

¹¹ Short, "Breast Feeding," 25.

¹² *Ibid.*, 24.

¹³ *Loc cit.*; for details and extensive literature see Richard B. Lee, *The !Kung San: Men, Women, and Work in a Foraging Society* (Cambridge, 1979), 47-49, 309-32.

As evidence for prolonged nursing in ancient Israel scholars frequently cite 2 Macc. 7:27 (2nd c. B.C.E.), which quotes the words of the mother of the seven Jewish martyrs. Encouraging the first of these victims of the decrees of Antiochus Epiphanes, she says, "I carried you nine months in my womb, and I nursed you for three years."¹⁴ Evidence for Late Bronze Age Israel is provided by 1 Sam. 1:20–24, which reads as follows:

ויהי לתקופת הימים ותהר חנה ותלד בן ותקרא את־שמו שמואל כי מה' שאלתיו ויעל האיש אלקנה וכל ביתו לזבח לה' את־זבח הימים ואת־נדרו וחנה לא עלתה כִּי־אמרה לאישה עד יגמל הנער והבאתיו ונראה את־פני ה' וישב שם עד־עולם ויאמר לה אלקנה אישה עשי הטוב בעיניך שבי עד־גמלך אתו אך יקם ה' את דברו ותשב האשה ותינק את־בנה עד גמלה אתו ותעלהו עמה כאשר גמלתו בפרים שלשה ואיפה אחת קמח ונבל יין ותבאהו בית ה' שלו והנער נער

When a year had passed Hannah had conceived and borne a son. She named him Samuel, "because," [she said], "it was from the LORD that I requested him."¹⁵ When the man Elkanah and his entire family went on pilgrimage¹⁶ to offer to the LORD the annual sacrifice¹⁷ and his votive offering,¹⁸ Hannah did not go on the pilgrimage, for she told her husband, "[I shall stay at home]¹⁹ until the child is weaned. When I present him, he will appear before the LORD, and he will remain there forever." Elkanah her husband told her, "Do what seems best to you. Stay at home until you have weaned him. May the LORD fulfill His promise."²⁰ So the woman remained at home, and she nursed her son until she weaned him. When she had weaned him she brought him on pilgrimage with her along with a three-year-old bull,²¹ an ephah²² of flour, and a jug of wine.

Qimḥi holds that this passage proves that Hannah nursed Samuel for two years.²³ Skinner assumes that Hannah nursed her son for two to three years.²⁴ H. P. Smith

14 C. U. Woolf, "Nurse," *IDB* 3:572; John Skinner, *Genesis, ICC*, 2nd ed. Edinburgh, 1930), 321–22 on Gen. 21:8–10. Cf. the Egyptian (21st dynasty; i.e., ca. 1085–945 B.C.E.) "Instruction of Ani," trans. John A. Wilson in *ANET*³, 420: "Thou wert born after thy months, (but) she was still yoked (with thee, for) her breast was in thy mouth for three years, continuously."

15 Our rendering of v. 20 is heavily influenced by P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., *I Samuel, AB* 8 (Garden City, N.Y., 1980), 50. On the incongruence of the etymology here supplied for the name of Hannah's son with the name Samuel, see now *ibid.*, 63–66.

16 For this usage of Heb. עלה, lit., "ascend," see also Judg. 21:5, 8; 1 Sam. 9:13–14; 10:3; Isa. 2:3 (= Mic. 4:2); Isa. 57:7; Ps. 24:3.

17 NJV; see A. Ehrlich, *Mikrâ ki-Peschutô* (Berlin, 1899–1901), 2:101 on 1 Sam. 1:3 [in Hebrew].

18 So NJV, rendering MT; but see discussion in McCarter, *I Samuel*, 55, n. 21.

19 The bracketed expression, which is based upon the words of the narrator in v. 23, is implied by the elliptical "עד," "until," here in v. 22; see *ibid.*, 55, 63.

20 For alternative readings of this clause see now NJV and *ibid.*, ad loc.

21 Heb. משלש בפר; this reading attested by LXX and Peshitta and supported by 4QSam^a is adopted, following McCarter and NJV margin, because the narrative in v. 25 assumes only one bull rather than MT's שלשה "with three bulls."

22 I.e., 22 liters.

23 According to the commentary of R. David Qimḥi (ca. 1160–1235 C.E.), Hannah weaned Samuel "at the end of 24 months, for that is the length of time that a baby nurses." So already Rashi, except that most printed editions of Rashi have the reading "22 months" instead of "24 months." With reference to the "24 months of nursing" it should be noted that just as modern commentators tend to read into 1 Sam. 1:20–24 the two years of nursing observed among the Palestinian Arabs early in the twentieth century C.E. or the three years mentioned in Old Babylonian wet-nurse contracts so do Medieval Jewish commentators read into 1 Sam. 1:20–24 the 24 month limit suggested as normal by R. Eliezer [son of Hyrcanus; late 1st and early 2nd c. C.E.] in Tosefta *Niddah* 2:2 and quoted in TB *Ketubbot* 60a and later codified in *Shulhan Aruk*,

reasons that Samuel was nursed for two years, "for this was the usual time, and is still the case in the East, cf. Koran 2²³³."²⁵ However, Smith notes that "some commentators have thought it impossible that the boy could be actually delivered to the priest at so early an age."²⁶ Since, however, there are ample attestations from the Middle East and elsewhere for weaning as late as at three, or seven, or ten, or even fifteen years of age,²⁷ the argument that Samuel could not have been presented to the service of the Temple "at so early an age" serves only to reinforce the impression conveyed by 1 Sam. 1:20–24 that Hannah nursed Samuel for a very long time indeed, whose precise duration remains a matter of speculation. Moreover, Hannah's insistence that neither she nor her vowed child need appear at the Temple of the LORD until Samuel has been weaned establishes the idea that nursing one's baby takes precedence over other cultic obligations.

Elsewhere, in keeping with Noth's suggestion that the Covenant Code (Exodus 21–23) emanates from the period of the Judges, which is represented by the narrative contained in 1 Samuel 1,²⁸ I have proposed the following:

The Covenant Code's restriction to males of the obligation (but not the right) to appear three times a year at the shrine may reflect the canonization of the legal precedent established by Hannah and approved by Elkahan at 1 Sam. 1:21–23.²⁹

Here I refer to Exod. 23:17:

שלש פעמים בשנה יראה כל זכורך
אל-פני האדן ה'

Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Sovereign, the LORD.³⁰

As I have noted elsewhere,³¹ it is not surprising that this provision was misconstrued as a law excluding women from the cult.³² Moreover, it is equally unsurprising, that the Book of Deuteronomy, whose egalitarian tendency toward the sexes is well known,³³ should suggest a formula to ensure that men would not be able to deny women the best of both worlds—nursing their babies even in public *and*

Yoreh Deah 81:7 (16th c.). According to the aforementioned passage in Tosefta, R. Eliezer's contemporary R. Joshua [b. Hananiah] holds that it is not abnormal for a child to nurse for four or five years.

24 Skinner, *Genesis*, 321. Charles J. Brim, *Medicine in the Bible* (New York, 1936), 188 states unequivocally, "from the Bible we learn that Hannah nursed her baby for three years."

25 Henry Preserved Smith, *The Books of Samuel, ICC* (Edinburgh, 1899), 12.

26 *Loc cit.*; so also Ehrlich, *Mikrâ ki-Pheschutô*, 2:102.

27 Hilma Granqvist, *Birth and Childhood Among the Arabs* (Helsinki, 1947), 247, n. 4; Ian G. Wickes, "A History of Infant Feeding," *Archives of Disease in Childhood* 28 (1953), 151. See now also Norma Jane Bumgarner, *Mothering Your Nursing Toddler*, rev. ed. (Franklin Park, Illinois, 1982).

28 Martin Noth, *The History of Israel*, trans. S. Godman (London, 1958), 103–4.

29 Gruber, "Women in the Cult According to the Priestly Code," n. 7.

30 See also Exod. 34:23; Deut. 16:16; for a later formulation of the same idea see Mishnah *Qiddushin* 1:7: . . . וכל מצוה עשה שהומן גרמא אנשים חייבין ונשים פטורות "In respect of any time-bound positive precept men are obligated while women are exempt." A positive precept is one the violation of which is a sin of omission.

31 Gruber, "Women in the Cult According to the Priestly Code," n. 7.

32 So, e.g., E. B. Cross, *The Hebrew Family* (Chicago, 1927), 49; Phyllis Trible, "Women in the Old Testament," *IDB Supplementary Volume* (Nashville, 1976), 964.

33 George Adam Smith, *The Book of Deuteronomy, CB* (Cambridge, 1918), 214.

participation in the public cult. By insisting in Deut. 31:12 that *האנשים והנשים והטף*, “men, women, and little children,”³⁴ assemble for the septennial reading of the Torah, Deuteronomy provides a ready answer for any insensitive male who may inquire “Why could she not leave her infant with a baby-sitter?” Deuteronomy’s answer is that God Himself commands that the baby herself be present!³⁵

Since lactational amenorrhea is a fact rather than an invention, it is not surprising that it was discussed by the ancients, some of whom concluded that milk is transformed menstrual blood.³⁶ Moreover, since lactational anovulation is likewise a fact rather than a modern invention, it should not be surprising that the author of the Book of Hosea should suggest a causal or at least sequential relationship between Gomer’s weaning her daughter Lo-Ruhamah and her conceiving her son Lo-Ammi. In Hos. 1:8 we read *ותגמל את-לא רחמה ותהר ותלד בן*, “When she had weaned Lo-Ruhamah, she conceived, and she bore a son.” Brim suggested over fifty years ago that Gomer “weaned her daughter in order to become pregnant and give birth to a son.”³⁷

The idea that in a patriarchal society daughters might be weaned earlier than sons³⁸ in order that the woman might try again with better luck to conceive a son suggests a most plausible answer to the question posed by Lev. 12:1–5 as to why a parturient should be *טמאה* ‘impure’, i.e., forbidden to engage in sex relations, twice as long after the birth of a daughter as she is after the birth of a son. Given the late Hebrew proverb *בת תחילה סימן יפה לבנים* “[The birth of] a daughter first is a favorable omen concerning [the birth of] sons,”³⁹ it is reasonable to suggest that Lev. 12:1–5 is meant to counter the notion that the first thought after the birth of a daughter is when to try for a son and that it is meant to provide an extra margin of time for mother and daughter to establish breast-feeding.⁴⁰

According to Gen. 21:7–8 the matriarch Sarah took it for granted that mothers nurse their own infants while according to Gen. 21:8 the weaning of Abraham and Sarah’s son Isaac was marked by a festive party. The precise age of Isaac on that auspicious occasion cannot be determined. However, Isa. 7:14–16 is commonly and reasonably taken to imply the following: 1) that a child in Judah in 734 B.C.E. was commonly nursed until age two or three; 2) that the diet of a weaned child featured *leben*⁴¹ and date honey; and 3) that a child of that age could be expected to distinguish

34 That *טף*, “little children, infants, collectively,” is to be distinguished from *בנים*, “children,” is demonstrated by Num. 16:27; 2 Chr. 20:13; 31:18; see dictionaries. Moreover, Deut. 1:39 equates *טפכם*, “your infants,” with *ורע טוב היום לא-ידעו היום אשר לא-יבניםם* “your children, who do not yet know [the difference between] sweet and sour,” i.e., ‘unweaned infants’. See George Buchanan Gray, *The Book of Isaiah, ICC* (Edinburgh, 1912), 131.

35 See Gruber, “Women in the Cult According to the Priestly Code,” n. 7; contrast the exegetical acrobatics of the ancient and medieval authorities cited there.

36 Aristotle, *Hist. Anima*, vii, 3, 21; so R. Meir (fl. ca. 130–160 C.E.) in TB *Niddah* 9a. See Brim, p. 188.

37 Brim, *Medicine*, 189.

38 Granqvist, *Birth and Childhood Among the Arabs*, 108, notes that among the Palestinian Arabs of the early twentieth century it was customary for boys to be nursed two and one half years, girls only one and one half years because “it is dangerous for any girl to be much pampered.” See now also J. S. Akin, R. E. Bilsborrow, D. K. Guilkey, and B. M. Popkin, “Breastfeeding Patterns and Determinants in the Near East: An Analysis for Four Countries,” *Population Studies* 40 (1986), 257.

39 TB *Baba Batra* 141a.

40 On establishing breast-feeding see Benjamin Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 4th ed. (New York, 1976), 98–108.

41 Concerning this yogurt-like dairy product, which is to this day as much a part of the daily diet of the peoples of the Near East as is corn flakes a part of the daily diet of Americans, see next note.

between sweet (Heb. טוב = Akk. *tubbātu*) and sour (Heb. רע).⁴² The famous passage reads as follows:

לכן יתן אדני הוא לכם אות הנה העלמה הרה וילדת בן
וקראת שמו עמנואל חמאה ודבש יאכל לדעתו מאוס ברע
ובחור בטוב כי בטרם ידע הנער מאוס ברע ובחור בטוב
תעזב האדמה אשר-אתה קץ מפני שני מלכיה

Therefore the LORD Himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is pregnant, and she is about to give birth to a son. She will name him Immanuel. He will eat leben and date honey when he has learned to reject sour (food) and choose sweet (food). Indeed, before the lad will learn to reject sour and choose sweet the land of whose two kings you are disgusted will have been abandoned.

While Ps. 8:2 takes it for granted that children continued to nurse after they "could say notable things,"⁴³ Isa. 28:9–10 suggests that it was common to wean children at the age when they could first learn to distinguish the letters of the alphabet.⁴⁴ The text in question reads as follows:

To whom shall He give instruction?	את-מי יורה דעה ואת-מי יבין שמועה
To whom shall He explain a message?	גמולי מחלב עתיקי משרים
To those newly weaned from milk//	כי צו לצו צו לקו קו לקו
Just taken away from (their mothers') breasts.	ועיר שם ועיר שם
Indeed, <i>šāw</i> by <i>šāw</i> (i.e., <i>šādē</i> by <i>šādē</i>), <i>qôp</i> by <i>qôp</i> .	
Here a lad, there a lad. ⁴⁵	

It is especially interesting to compare the demographic picture of pre-Exilic Israel, whose cultic law was supportive of mothers' nursing their own infants on demand, with the demographic picture referred to in the Old Babylonian Epic of Atrahasis. This epic stems from a period in the history of ancient Iraq that begins ca. 1894 and ends ca. 1595 B.C.E. According to this epic, the primeval flood came about because the sleep of the god Enlil was being disturbed by the noise of the expanding population⁴⁶ much as parents' afternoon naps are often disturbed by their noisy children. The flood would have destroyed all of humankind had not another god, Ea, leaked the information of the impending disaster to Atrahasis and had Ea not commanded Atrahasis to build a boat, in which he could sit out the flood together with his family and the various species of birds and animals.⁴⁷

42 Gray, *The Book of Isaiah*, 122–36; Samuel David Luzzatto, *Il Profeta Isaia* (Padua, 1867), 110–13; H. M. I. Gevariahu, "He Will Eat Milk and Honey," in *Sefer Auerbach*, ed. A. Biram (Jerusalem, 1955), 169–71 [in Hebrew]. For discernment's being a prerequisite for consumption of solids, cf. 1 Cor. 3:1, 2; Heb. 5:13, 14.

43 Simon S. Levin, *Adam's Rib: Essays on Biblical Medicine* (Los Altos, California, 1970), 130.

44 According to Kenneth S. Goodman and Yetta M. Goodman, "Learning to Read is Natural," in *Theory and Practice of Early Reading* (Hillsdale, N.J., 1979), 145, "Reading begins when children respond to meaningful printed symbols in a situational context with which they are familiar," i.e., from age 3 onward; see there, 144–47.

45 Such an understanding of Isaiah 28 has been advocated by a large number of scholars, most recently Aaron Demsky, "A Proto-Canaanite Abecedar," *Tel Aviv* 4 (1977), 16; see the extensive literature cited there. Note that Heb. ועיר "lad" is both cognate and semantic equivalent of Akk. *šebrum* "child."

46 W. G. Lambert and A. R. Millard, *Atra-Ḥasis: The Babylonian Story of the Flood* (Oxford, 1970), 72, lines 7–8.

47 *Ibid.*, 89–93.

When in the postdiluvian period the population again expanded, the gods enacted the following decrees:

*ina nīšī alittumma lā alittum
libšīma ina nīšī Pāšittum
lišbat šerra ina birkī alittim
šuknī ukbakkāti ēnēti u egišīāti
lū ikkibum šināma ʿaʿlādam pur ʿsīʾ⁴⁸*

Let there be among people women who bear and women who do not bear.
Let there be among people the Pashittu-demon
To snatch the baby from the lap of her who bore it.⁴⁹
Establish *ugbaltu*-women, *entu*-women, and *igišītu*-women,⁵⁰
And let them be taboo and so stop childbirth.

A. D. Kilmer in her masterful study, "The Mesopotamian Concept of Overpopulation and Its Solution as Reflected in the Mythology," makes the following observation:

That limiting the population by "birth control" should have been conceived by the mythographer as the original motivation for certain cult practices is unexpected to say the least. The practices to which I refer, and which are known from many contexts, are chastity or celibacy, or methods of intercourse that would avoid pregnancy.⁵¹

The author of the Atrahasis Epic suggests solutions to the problems of overpopulation not unlike those being proffered in Third World countries where attempts to limit the population are being thwarted by the adoption of artificial infant formula and the consequent increase of fertility. Knodel has pointed out that in a society where amenorrhea averages seventeen months the introduction of bottle feeding will reduce the average birth interval by 40 percent and increase mean fertility by 64 percent.⁵²

The question arises as to why Mesopotamian sacred literature of the Old Babylonian period should confront the issue of overpopulation while the Hebrew Bible should look upon fertility as a blessing.

It has long been observed that the employment of wet-nurses in the context of the history of ancient Iraq is especially characteristic of the Old Babylonian period.⁵³ It has been taken for granted that the numerous contracts, law-suits, and legal statutes concerning wet-nursing from the Old Babylonian period reflect the twin realities of

48 Ibid., 102, lines 2–8.

49 It is well known that *Pāšittu(m)* "Ms. Snatcher" is one of the names of *Lamaštu*, which designates both a disease-causing demon and the disease, whose symptoms include jaundice, fever, paralysis, and craving for water; see *AHW.*, 845a, s.v., *pāšittu(m)*; *CAD* L, 66–67; W. Farber, "Lamaštu," *RLA* 6:439–46.

50 On the characteristics of the female cultic functionary called *ugbaltu* and her similarity to the *nadītu*, see J. Renger, "Untersuchungen zum Priestertum in der altbabylonischen Zeit," *ZA* 58 (1967), 144–49; on the *ēntu*, see there, 134–44; on the *igišītu*, see *CAD* I/J, 43.

51 *Orientalia* 41 (1972), 172. Recognition that the Old Babylonian epic is concerned with the dilemma of overpopulation is found also in the following: William J. Moran, "The Babylonian Story of the Flood," *Biblica* 5 (1971), 51–61; Isaac M. Kikawada, "Literary Conventions of the Primeval History," *Annual of the Japanese Biblical Institute* 1 (1975), 12–13; Tikva Frymer-Kensky, "The Atrahasis Epic and Its Significance for our Understanding of Genesis 1–9," *BA* 40 (1976), 147–55, especially 149–50.

52 "Breast-Feeding and Population Growth," *Science* 198 (1977), 112.

53 M. San Nicolò, "Ammenvertrag," *RLA* 1:96–97.

maternal death and natural mother's inability to produce sufficient milk.⁵⁴ However, examination of data from various times and places from ancient Egypt through Homeric Greece, the world of the Talmuds, and medieval, renaissance, and modern Europe suggests that the legal regulation of wet-nursing and litigation arising from the employment of wet-nurses are characteristic of cultures in which it is fashionable for women of the more powerful economic classes to hand over their children to wet-nurses. It is taken for granted in the study of the historical demography of medieval Europe that the use of wet-nurses would increase the fertility of the mothers of the infants who were sent away to wet-nurses.⁵⁵ Several reputable authorities have suggested that the desire of the wealthier classes to produce more children may have been a major factor in the adoption of the practice of sending infants out to wet-nurses.⁵⁶ The examination of the cultural phenomenon of the employment of wet-nurses to nurse the children of the *awīlūtu*, "members of the ruling economic class" in Old Babylonian society should, therefore, treat this phenomenon in the light of what is known of wet-nursing among similar economic classes elsewhere rather than as a unique instance in which wet-nursing was confined to children whose mothers died or whose mothers had insufficient milk.⁵⁷

With reference to the assumption that wet-nurses would have been employed primarily for the benefit of women who were physically unable to nurse the following should be noted:

Experts in the field contend that virtually all women can produce enough milk for their infants. . . . there is empirical evidence that some women do have difficulty breast feeding and that many infants, especially among the poor in developing countries, do not thrive on breast milk alone. Insufficient milk is reported in affluent as well as poor countries, however.⁵⁸

However, "the WHO [= World Health Organization] Collaborative Study on Breast-feeding conducted in seven developing and two developed countries" published in 1981 suggests that the "insufficient milk" syndrome is largely culturally determined.

54 E. Ebeling, "Amme," in *Reallexikon der Vorgeschichte*, ed. M. Ebert (Berlin, 1924), 1:154–55.

55 Stone, *The Family* (see n. 2), 63–64.

56 Josiah Cox Russell, "Aspects démographiques de débuts de la féodalité," *Annales* 20 (1965), 1118–27; idem, *The Control of Late Ancient and Medieval Populations* (Philadelphia, 1985), xii, 139, 179, 205; Mary Martin McLaughlin, "Survivors and Surrogates: Children and Parents from the Ninth to the Thirteenth Centuries," in Lloyd de Mause, ed., *The History of Childhood* (New York, 1974; repr. 1975), 115; James B. Ross, "The Middle-Class Child in Urban Italy, Fourteenth to Early Sixteenth Century," in de Mause, *History of Childhood*, 186; Steven Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled: Family Life in Reformation Europe* (Cambridge, MA, 1983), 118; Fildes, *Breasts* (n. 6), 108–9.

57 Nahum M. Sarna, "The Birth of Moses," *New Traditions* 3 (1986), 84–85, assumes that the Mesopotamian wet-nurse contracts and *CH* 194 relate to the adoption of foundlings. As we demonstrate, this is not the typical background of wet-nursing in Old Babylonian Mesopotamia. However, the employment of wet-nurses especially to care for foundlings is very much in evidence in the Greek papyri from Roman period Egypt. See Keith R. Bradley, "Sexual Regulations in Wet-Nursing Contracts from Roman Egypt," *Klio* 62 (1980), 325; see also Paul Martin Meyer, *Juristische Papyri* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1920), 134–36; W. Schubart, "Die Amme im alten Alexandrien," *Jahrbuch für Kinderheilkunde* 70 (1909), 82–95; Allan C. Johnson, *Roman Egypt to the Reign of Diocletian*, ed. Tenney Frank (Baltimore, 1936; repr., Patterson, N.J., 1959), 288–87.

58 *Population Reports*, Series J, no. 24 (November-December 1981), pt. 1, p. J-532a; see also the extensive literature cited there.

For example, "In Guatemala 60 percent of the affluent urban women cited insufficient milk compared with 44 percent of the urban poor women and 28 percent of the rural women."⁵⁹ Hence, experts suggest the following:

The claim of insufficient milk covers a variety of problems ranging from genuine maternal ill health or severe malnutrition to improper feeding techniques, faltering growth or illness on the part of the infant, early introduction of other foods, and lack of confidence, as well as a personal preference not to breast-feed. Some of these problems are poorly understood or cannot be resolved. Often, however, a lack of support and proper information may be the real reasons that women have problems breast-feeding.

In societies where breasts are seen primarily as sexual and erotic, the function of breast-feeding may seem awkward and embarrassing, and women may be uncomfortable nursing their infants in public. Women may also be concerned that breast-feeding will change the shape and size of the breasts, although this has not been proven. Leakage of breast milk during sexual intercourse and at other times until the let down [i.e., milk ejection or release of breast milk to the infant] reflex is well established may also be disturbing.

Inherent in breast-feeding is the continued heavy reliance of the infant on the mother. The mother's body must continue to provide nutritional support for the infant, as it did during pregnancy. Also, a woman who is fully breast-feeding cannot leave the infant for more than very short periods. Thus breast-feeding limits a woman's ability to move about without bringing the infant along. At the same time, breast-feeding diminishes the opportunities for the father or others to share in feeding the child. These disadvantages become particularly apparent in urban areas where jobs tend to be incompatible with full breast-feeding and where women have opportunities to be active outside the home.⁶⁰

As for the assumption that the Old Babylonian materials relating to wet-nursing must presuppose either the death of the mother or the mother's physical inability to produce sufficient milk the following data from various cultures should be noted:

[In France] during the eighteenth century the methods of infant feeding were maternal nursing, wet nursing, feeding with the milk of various animals, and the feeding of pap and panada. However, the majority of infants, especially those of the Parisians, were placed out with wet nurses, first since maternal nursing was not the custom, second to carefully guard the mother's beauty and freshness, and third on account of sexual incontinence. Even the poorest Parisians made a practice of abandoning their infants to wet nurses.⁶¹

In 1780 it was estimated that about 21,000 infants were born each year in Paris. About 700 of these were nursed by their mothers; 700 by a nurse in the paternal home; 2000 or 3000, usually children of the rich bourgeois, were placed with wet nurses in the suburbs; and the remainder confided to wet nurses, who came up from the provinces to obtain nurslings, and then carried them back to their homes for feeding.⁶²

Contact between the family of the infant and the prospective nurse was made through special employment bureaus, which had existed in Paris from as early as the twelfth century.⁶³ The minimum wage of wet-nurses was established by statute.⁶⁴ Prior to the decree of August 25, 1792, "that no longer could one be imprisoned for non-payment

59 Ibid., p. J-532b.

60 Loc cit.; on the cultural factors responsible for the insufficient milk syndrome, see also Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 108-11.

61 T. G. H. Drake, "Infant Welfare Laws in France in the Eighteenth Century," *Annals of Medical History*, 7 (1935), 50.

62 Ibid., 51.

63 Loc. cit.

64 Ibid., 54.

of wet nursing fees,"⁶⁵ "each year in the city of Paris from five hundred to six hundred persons were imprisoned for failure to pay wet nurses' fees."⁶⁶

With reference to the upper classes in Renaissance Tuscany it has been pointed out:

Birth in the parental bed, bath in the same room, and baptism in the parish church were followed almost at once by delivery into the hands of a *balia* or wet-nurse, generally a peasant woman living at a distance, with whom the infant would presumably remain for about two years or until weaning was completed.⁶⁷

In fact, "among Italian writers [on child-care] of the fourteenth century the wet-nurse is accepted as a matter of course."⁶⁸ Fifteenth century Italian writers "pass rapidly . . . from advocacy of the ideal solution [nursing by the mother] to" allowing wet-nursing "if she wishes to bear more children in the near future" or "if it offends her."⁶⁹

While the wet-nursing business has been called "a peculiarly French institution which flourished in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries,"⁷⁰ de Mause pointed out that wet-nurses "have been well organized ever since Roman wet-nurses gathered in the Colonna Lactavia to sell their services."⁷¹ Moreover, "the practice [of giving children to wet-nurses] continued inexorably until the eighteenth century in England and America."⁷² In Germany among the middle and upper classes in the nineteenth century "wet-nurses were used very freely, and it was rare to see a mother nursing her own."⁷³ Likewise, in late nineteenth century Russia "the use of wet-nurses was prevalent among the nobility."⁷⁴

In ancient Egypt "from an early time the wet-nurse of the king and queen played an important part at the court." She was called "the great wet-nurse, who nourished the god, with sweet breast, mighty with respect to nursing, the great wet-nurse of the lord of the two lands, who beautified the Horus." Hence, "at the court of Ikhnaton"⁷⁵ the great wet-nurse of the queen, who suckled the goddess [i.e., the queen, who was considered a goddess] was often a very influential personality."⁷⁶ The Papyrus Ebers, which dates from the middle of the sixteenth century B.C.E., has been called "the earliest medical encyclopedia from Egypt."⁷⁷ Taking for granted the use of wet-nurses

65 *Ibid.*, 55.

66 *Loc. cit.*

67 James B. Ross, "The Middle-Class Child in Urban Italy, Fourteenth to Early Sixteenth Century," in de Mause, ed., *History of Childhood*, 184-85.

68 *Ibid.*, 185.

69 *Ibid.*, 186.

70 George D. Sussman, "Parisian Infants and Norman Wet Nurses in the Early Nineteenth Century: A Statistical Study," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 7 (1977), 637.

71 Lloyd de Mause, "The Evolution of Childhood," in *idem*, ed., *History of Childhood*, 34.

72 *Ibid.*, 35.

73 Priscilla Robertson, "Home As a Nest: Middle Class Childhood in Nineteenth Century Europe," in *ibid.*, 411.

74 Patrick D. Dunn, "That Enemy is the Baby": Childhood in Imperial Russia," in *ibid.*, 387.

75 According to William W. Hallo and William K. Simpson, *The Ancient Near East: A History* (New York, 1971), 300, the dates of his reign are 1363-1347 B.C.E.

76 Adolf Erman and Hermann Ranke, *Aegypten und Aegyptisches Leben im Altertum* (Tübingen, 1923), 90; see also Fildes, *Breasts*, 7 and the literature cited there.

77 Wickes, "History of Infant Feeding" (n. 27), 154.

as a matter of course, this ancient document prescribes that for a child, who is too young to swallow pills, "the pills shall be dissolved in the nurse's milk."⁷⁸ Likewise, among the Greeks the employment of wet-nurses to nurse the children of the rich and powerful goes back to the Homeric period.⁷⁹ In the classical period of ancient Greece the well-off employed wet-nurses, who were usually slaves. In the last century of the Roman republic rich families adopted the Greek practice of employing wet-nurses.⁸⁰

The employment of wet-nurses as a characteristic of the economically well-off rather than as a solution to the twin dilemmas of maternal death and the insufficient milk syndrome is reflected also in the early 3rd c. C.E. law-code *Mishnah* promulgated in Palestine by Rabbi Judah, who held the Roman imperial office of Patriarch of the Jews. In *Mishnah Ketubbot* 5:5 we read as follows:

אלו מלאכות שהאשה עושה לבעלה טוחנת ואופה ומכבסת מבשלת
ומניקה את בנה מצעת לו המטה ועושה בצמר
הכניסה לו שפחה אחת לא טוחנת ולא אופה ולא מכבסת
שתים אינה מבשלת ואינה מניקה את בנה
שלש אינה מצעת לו המטה ואינה עושה בצמר
ארבע יושבת בקתדרא

The following are the activities, which a wife is required⁸¹ to perform for her husband [as a legal consequence of her marriage]: she must grind [flour], and she must bake [bread], and she must launder [his clothing]. She must cook [his food], and she must breastfeed her child.⁸² She must prepare for him his bed, and she must work in wool. If, however, she has provided him⁸³ with one slave woman, she [the wife] is not required to grind [flour], nor is she required to bake [bread], nor is she required to launder [his clothing]. [If, however, she has provided him with]⁸⁴ two [slave women], she [the wife] is not required to cook [his food], nor is she required to breastfeed her child.⁸⁵ [If, however, she has provided him with] three [slave women], she is not required to prepare his bed, nor is she required to work in wool. [If, however, she has provided him with] four [slave women], she is required [only] to sit in a comfortable chair.⁸⁶

This text clearly reflects the viewpoint that a mother's nursing her own child is more a matter of economic necessity rather than a matter of what is natural and

78 H. Joachim, *Papyrus Ebers* (Berlin, 1890), 68, 49:22.

79 O. Navarre, "Nutrix," *Dictionnaire des antiquités grecques et romaines* (Paris, 1904–1919), 4:122b.

80 *Ibid.*, 123; see also Wilhelm Braams, *Zur Geschichte des Ammenwesens im klassischen Altertum*, Jenner medizin-historische Beiträge, Heft 5 (Jena, 1913); see also below, n. 136.

81 In Mishnaic Hebrew prescription is generally conveyed by description as it is here; cf. Jacob Neusner, *A History of the Mishnaic Law of Purities*, pt. 21: *The Redaction and Formulation of the Order of Purities in Mishnah and Tosefta* (Leiden, 1977), 308–10. Hence the prescriptions in Tractate *Yoma* for the Day of Atonement rites in the future temple under the auspices of the Pharisees' spiritual heirs were mistakenly interpreted by Herbert Danby, *The Mishnah* (London, 1933), 162, as descriptions in the historical present of the rites as performed in the Second Temple!

82 This text shows that in Mishnaic Hebrew *bēn*, lit., "son," may denote a "child" whether male or female.

83 There is some question in the textual tradition of the *Mishnah* as to whether or not the expression *lō* "for him" should be written or supplied mentally; see commentaries. Moreover, in the exegetical tradition, the meaning of this clause is extended to include also (1) a woman who at the time of her marriage had the means to acquire a slave woman even if she did not provide a slave woman; and (2) a woman who saved up for a slave woman during the course of her married life. See *TB Ketubbot* 61a.

84 On the role of apocopation in the language of the *Mishnah*, see Neusner, *History of the Mishnaic Law of Purities* 21, 220–32.

85 The assumption is that the second slave woman will cook the food and nurse the baby.

86 See dictionaries of Rabbinic Hebrew, s.v. קתדרא.

desirable for mother and child. Interestingly, a somewhat later Rabbinic text, *Tosefta*,⁸⁷ reports a controversy between the School of Shammai and the School of Hillel. The former are noted for their upper class orientation while the latter are noted for their working class orientation.⁸⁸ The text reads as follows:

נדרה שלא להניק את-בנה
 בית שמיי אומי שומטת את דדיה מפיו
 ובית הלל אומי כופה אותה להניק⁸⁹

If she vowed not to nurse her child, the School of Shammai holds that she must remove her nipples from its mouth while the School of Hillel holds that he [her husband] compels her to nurse.

According to another tradition reported in the Babylonian Talmud *Ketubbot* 59b, the School of Shammai holds apart from the above context that “she does not breastfeed.” The exegetical tradition recorded in the commentary of Rashi (1040–1105) insists that the latter ruling of the School of Shammai refers to all women, even those, who have not vowed and that the reason “she does not nurse” is that “she does not wish to do so.”

Especially interesting is the following passage in the TB *Ketubbot* 61a:

היא אומרת להניק והוא אומר שלא להניק
 שומעין לה צערה דידה הוא
 הוא אומר להניק והיא אומרת שלא להניק מהו
 כל היכא דלאו אורחה שומעין לה
 היא אורחה והוא לאו אורחיה מאי
 בתר דידיה אולינן או בתר דידה אולינן
 ופשטינא ליה מהא
 עולה עמו ואינה יורדת עמו

If she [a mother] expresses a desire to nurse [her infant], but he [her husband] expresses a desire that [she] not nurse, she is heeded [because] the pain [resulting from the engorgement of the breasts of a parturient who does not nurse her baby]⁹⁰ is hers. If he [the husband] expresses a desire [for her] to nurse, and she expresses a desire not to nurse, what is the rule? [The rule is as follows]: Whenever it is not the custom [in her family to breastfeed],⁹¹ she is heeded. What is the rule [in the case where] it is her [family's] custom [to breastfeed], but it is not his [family's] custom [to breastfeed]? Do we follow his [familial custom], or do we follow hers? I determined the answer to this question on the basis of the following principle: “She [the wife] ascends [the socio-economic ladder] with him [her husband], but she does not descend [the socio-economic ladder] with him.”⁹²

87 On the nature of *Tosefta* see *The Tosefta*, trans. Jacob Neusner, (New York, 1977), 6:ix-x; contrast Phillip Sigal, “The Scholarship of Saul Lieberman: Reflections on His First Yearzeit,” *Judaism* 33 (1984), 138–39.

88 See L. Ginzberg, *On Jewish Law and Lore* (Philadelphia, 1955), 102–18; L. Finkelstein, *Akiba* (New York, 1936), 321, n. 25 and passim.

89 *Tosefta Ketubbot* 5:5 according to *The Tosefta: The Order of Nashim*, ed. S. Lieberman (New York, 1967), 73, lines 5–6.

90 Bracketed portion derived from the commentary of Rashi.

91 Bracketed portion derived from the commentary of Rashi.

92 For additional Rabbinic texts see the thorough presentation in Julius Preuss, *Biblical and Talmudic Medicine*, trans. Fred Rosner (New York & London, 1978), 404–10; see also the discussion of Rabbinic materials in S. S. Kottick, “Breast-feeding in Ancient Jewish Sources: Historical and Legal Aspects,” in S. Freier and A. I. Eidelman, *Human Milk: Its Biological and Social Value* (Amsterdam, 1980), 8–12. Dr. Elliot Horowitz of the Dept. of History, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, has brought to my attention

As in France in the 18th and 19th centuries C.E. so also in Old Babylonian Mesopotamia the wet-nursing business was regulated by law. The Code of Eshnunna⁹³ law 32 provided the following penalty for an *awīlum* who did not pay his child's wet-nurse:

šumma awīlum māršu ana šūnuqim ana tarbītim iddinma ipram piššatam lubuštam šalaš šanātim lā iddin 10 mana tarbī mārīšu išaqqalma māršu itarru

If a citizen gave his son for wet-nursing and for child care, but he did not provide (the wet-nurse) food, oil (and) clothing for three years, he shall pay (lit., "weigh out") 10 *minas* (i.e., 5 kg. or 11 lbs.) [of silver] for the upbringing of his son, and he shall take back his son.

Again, as in nineteenth century France,⁹⁴ so apparently in Old Babylonian Mesopotamia wet-nurses were often negligent of their charges. To discourage such negligence Code of Hammurapi⁹⁵ law 194 provides for punitive damages as follows:

šumma awīlum māršu ana mušēniqtim iddinma māru šu ina qāt mušēniqtim imtūt mušēniqtim balum abīšu u ummīšu māra šaniamma irtakkas ukannūšima aššum balum abīšu u ummīšu maram šaniam irkussu irassa inakkisū

If a citizen gave his child to a wet-nurse and that child died while in the care⁹⁶ of the wet-nurse (and) the wet-nurse without (the knowledge of) his (the deceased child's) father and of his (the deceased child's) mother contracts (to nurse) another child, they shall prove that she (was guilty of the aforementioned), and they shall cut off her breast⁹⁷ because she contracted for him (i.e.), another child, without (the knowledge of) his (the deceased child's) father and his mother.

The following passages from Old Babylonian wet-nursing contracts indicate that on more than one occasion two women⁹⁸ may have contracted as partners to nurse another woman's child on a fee basis for three years:

Ḫuzalatum nadīt Šamaš mārassa ana Dubabatum u Buriya ana tēnīqim iddin ipram u lubuštam ša šalaš šanātim 4 šiqil kaspim maḥrū libba[šina] tāb (CT 47, no. 46, lines 1-8)

PN₁, a devotee of Shamash,⁹⁹ gave her daughter to PN₂ and PN₃ for wet-nursing. They received

the extensive use of Christian wet-nurses by upper class Jewish families in medieval Europe notwithstanding the fact that both Judaism and Christianity forbade the nursing of Jewish children by Christian women. Space does not allow me to analyze these materials here.

93 For the scholarly literature concerning the precise date of this law code, which is now generally dated a few years before the Code of Hammurapi (on which see below, n. 95), see S. M. Paul, *Studies in the Book of the Covenant in the Light of Cuneiform and Biblical Law*, VTS 18 (Leiden, 1970), 11, n. 4.

94 George D. Sussman, "The Wet-nursing Business in Nineteenth Century France," *French Historical Studies* 9 (1975), 320.

95 Ca. 1791 B.C.E.

96 Lit., "in the hand"; on this idiom and its Hebrew equivalent כַּיָּד see E. Dhorme, *L'emploi métaphorique des noms de parties du corps en Hébreu et en Akkadien* (Paris, 1963), 149.

97 Here as in CH 195, 218, 253 it is the offending organ, which is punished.

98 John Foote, "An Infant Hygiene Campaign of the Second Century," *Archives of Pediatrics* 37 (1920), 177, notes that in the child-care handbook prepared in Greek during the reign of Trajan (110-130 C.E.) Soranus of Ephesus "advises not one wet nurse, but two or three, in case one should be taken ill." Perhaps, the same rationale may explain the reference to two wet nurses for one child in so many of the OB contracts. Foote concludes from this aspect of Soranus' advice that he "unquestionably had a wealthy clientele."

99 On the *nadītu* see Rivkah Harris, *Ancient Sippar* (Istanbul, 1975), 305-12 and the series of articles cited there, 304, n. 3. It is understandable that since the *nadītu* or devotee of Shamash was not supposed to be a mother Huzalatum would have to make provision for the care of her infant so that she herself could

food and clothing for three years (and) four shekels (i.e., 33.32 grams or 1.18 oz.) of silver. They were pleased.¹⁰⁰

^m*Narām-šarur šilip rēmim mār Aḥuwaqar u Narubtum ana Eribam u Zirpa ana tēnīqim iddinūšu ipram piššatam lubuštam ša šalaš šanātim maḥrú libbašina tāb* (CT 48. no. 70, lines 1–9)

As for PN₁, the newborn¹⁰¹ son of PN₂ and PN₃, they [his parents] gave him to PN₄ and PN₅ for wet-nursing. They [PN₄ and PN₅] received food, oil (and) clothing for three years. They were pleased.

^{md}*Sin-iddinam mār d[. . .] u Belissunu mā[rat . . .] mārašsunu ana šūnuqim ana Ištar-lamassī u*

^d*Nana-Uri . . . iddinū 2/3 šiqil kaspim tēnīq[šina] maḥrat libbašina tāb*¹⁰² (UASP 243, lines 1–9)

PN₁ son of [. . .] and PN₂ dau[ghter of . . .] gave their son for wet-nursing to PN₃ and PN₄. . . Their wet-nursing fee of 2/3 shekels [i.e., 19.43 grams or .68 oz.] of silver was received. They were pleased.

These typical contracts, to all of which the natural mother appears to be a party, clearly demonstrate that the use of wet-nurses in Old Babylonian Mesopotamia was not, as was previously assumed, typically associated with foundlings or with children whose mothers had died in childbirth. In addition, these documents suggest that the precise fee paid to the wet-nurse, whether in silver or goods was a matter left entirely to the discretion of the parties to the particular contract.

The following document suggests that the parents faithfully paid off their contractual obligations to the wet-nurses for two out of the three years. In the third year, however, one of the wet-nurse partners had to go to court on behalf of herself and her partner to obtain the balance due:

^{md}*Marduk-nāšir u Šat-dMarduk māršunu ana šūnuqim ana Waqartum iddinū tēnīq šattim 2 Waqartum u Ḥabilkīnum maḥrú libbašina tāb* ^f*Waqartum aššum tēnīqša dayyānī imḥurma dayyānū qašdāti issūma tēnīqam maḥrat*¹⁰³

PN₁ and PN₂ gave their son for wet-nursing to PN₃. PN₃ and PN₄ received the wet-nursing fee for two years; they were pleased. (In the third year, however), PN₃ went to court (lit., to the judges) for her wet-nursing fee, and the judges summoned the devotees of Adad¹⁰⁴ (i.e., PN₃ and PN₄), and she (PN₃) received the wet-nursing fee.

As in other times and places, so also in Old Babylonian Mesopotamia was the infant in danger not only of the wet-nurse's negligence but also of her absconding with the child.¹⁰⁵ Such a case has been described in the following account from the forty-first year of the reign of Hammurapi:

carry out her duties in the temple of Shamash. It should be obvious that Huzalatum's being a mother reflects the distinction between the prohibition against a *nadītu*'s giving birth and the adherence to that prohibition on the part of the woman in question.

100 On the idiom *libbu tāb* see Y. Muffs, "Joy and Love as Metaphorical Expressions of Willingness and Spontaneity in Cuneiform, Ancient Hebrew, and Related Literatures," in *Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults for Morton Smith at Sixty*, ed. Jacob Neusner (Leiden, 1975), 3:1–36.

101 See J. J. Finkelstein, "šilip rēmim and Related Matters," in *Kramer Anniversary Volume, AOAT 25* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1976), 193.

102 Additional references to wet-nurses in OB contracts include *SCT* 42; *UASP* 242; *VS* 16 no. 80, 11. 1–4; *MDP* 23 no. 288; on the latter text see Finkelstein, "šilip rēmim," 193, nn. 12–13; for additional OB texts referring to wet-nurses see below, nn. 114, 122, 129.

103 *VS* 7, 37, lines 1–18.

104 On the role of the *qadīštu* or "woman devoted to the service of Adad," see Mayer I. Gruber, "Hebrew *qēdēsāh* and Her Canaanite and Akkadian Cognates," *UF* 18 (1986), 133–48.

105 See Wickes, "History of Infant Feeding," 232.

aššum Aḥazunu ša Dadâ mār Nūr-ilišu išti Kullupat . . . mušēniqtiša ina pīt abullim ša Larsa ilqūši Šir-Ištar isahhuršima ina bīt Dadâ mār Nūr-ilišu imuršima ¹Šir-Ištar ^dŠin-iddinam imhurma ^fAḥatum aššatašu irdâma Aḥatum kī'am iqbi ummašūma¹⁰⁶ Aḥazunu ul mārarka marti amat bīt emiya Šir-Ištar kī'am iqbi ummašūma ^fAḥazunu mārī ul amtu ana Kullupat amti ša bīt emiki ana šūnuqim addišši ^dŠin-iddinam Šir-Ištar ana niš ilim iddimma Šir-Ištar ina bī ^dŠamaš kī'am izkur ummašūma ^fAḥazunu lū mārī ana Kullupat ana šūnuqi lū addišši la iturru Aḥatum dīnī lā upaqarū. . . .¹⁰⁷

In the case of Aḥazunu whom Dada the son of Nur-ilishu adopted from Kullupat her wet-nurse at the entrance of the (city-)gate of Larsa, Sir-Ishtar repeatedly searched for her,¹⁰⁸ and she found her¹⁰⁹ in the house of Dada. Sir-Ishtar approached Sin-iddinam,¹¹⁰ and Aḥatum his (the latter's) wife came forward. Aḥatum spoke as follows: "Aḥazunu is not your daughter. She is the daughter of a slave woman attached to my father-in-law's estate." Sir-Ishtar spoke as follows: "Aḥazunu is my daughter. She is not a slave girl.¹¹¹ I gave her for wet-nursing to Kullupat a slave woman attached to the estate of your father-in-law." Sin-iddinam had the oath administered to Sir-Ishtar. Sir-Ishtar declared as follows (under oath) in the temple of Shamash:¹¹² "Aḥazunu is indeed my daughter. Indeed I gave her to Kullupat for wet-nursing." Aḥatum did not respond.¹¹³ They (the erstwhile adoptive parents of Aḥazunu) did not contest the verdict (established by the natural father's oath).

That the employment of a wet-nurse to nurse one's children was taken for granted, at least by members of the *awīlūtum*,¹¹⁴ is suggested not only by the legal documents quoted above but also by a passage in one Old Babylonian version of Atrahasis. The passage reads as follows:

*ali alittum ulladūma umm[u š]erri ušēnequ ramānša*¹¹⁵

Where the mother gives birth, and the mother nurses the child herself.

With reference to the emphatic *ramānša*, "herself," von Soden noted over thirty years ago: "Die Empfehlung des Nährens die Mutter selbst, die diese Vers enthält, ist angesichte der so häufigen Inanspruchnahme von Ammendiensten durch Mütter aus gut gestellten Familien zu beachten."¹¹⁶

106 This Akkadian expression, like Biblical Heb. לְאִמֶּר at the end of a verse, is best rendered by a colon followed by quotation marks.

107 G. Boyer, *Contribution à l'histoire juridique de la 1^{re} dynastie babylonienne* (Paris, 1928), 70–71, lines 1–29.

108 On this nuance of Akk. *saḥāru* and its late Hebrew cognates see S. D. Sperling, "Late Hebrew *h̄zr* and Akkadian *saḥāru*," *JANES* 5 (1973), 397–404.

109 Lit., "and she saw her."

110 The latter, it appears from what follows, was the adoptive father, who received the child from her wet-nurse.

111 The implication is that the daughter of a female slave is herself a female slave as also in Exod. 21:4 and in Mishnah *Qiddushin* 3:12.

112 In the Old Babylonian period there was no special *bīt dīni*, "court of law," which is first attested in the Neo-Babylonian period (626–539 B.C.E.). Hence judicial functions were carried on in temples. The temple of Shamash is especially appropriate for Shamash is the Babylonian god of justice.

113 The operative principle in its Rabbinic Heb. formulation is שתיקה כהודאה דמיא "Silence is tantamount to acquiescence." See TB *Yevamot* 87b.

114 That the practice was adopted also by members of the *muškēnūtum*, "middle class," is suggested by CT 43, no. 6, pl. 3, lines 26–27: [*mār*] *muškēnim ša ana tēnīqi[m]* . . . *ilq]ū annikī'am imāt* " . . . the middle class [child], whom she [Ilsha-hegal] took in for a wet-nursing fee, will die here. . . ."

115 W. von Soden, "Zu einigen altbabylonischen Dichtungen," *Orientalia* 26 (1957), 310, lines 21–22.

116 *Ibid.*, 314.

As we have seen, throughout the history of Western civilization the practice of handing over infants to wet-nurses has been especially characteristic of especially affluent women in urban societies. Certainly, the *awīlūtum*, "the ruling economic class," portrayed as entering into contracts with wet-nurses in the Code of Eshnunna and Code of Hammurapi fits this age-old pattern. Moreover, the following data suggest that the employment of wet-nurses in Old Babylonian Southern Mesopotamia was associated with a highly urbanized society:

[In Southern Mesopotamia] urbanization reached maximum proportions in late Early Dynastic times,¹¹⁷ roughly in the middle of the third millennium B.C. From that time forward, for more than the following millennium and a half, trends in settlement ran strongly and cumulatively in the opposite direction. At least until the end of the Old Babylonian period,¹¹⁸ however, it is also evident that the bulk of the southern Mesopotamian population not only remained urban but continued to cluster disproportionately in cities of very large size.¹¹⁹

These data suggest that both the historical flood,¹²⁰ whose memory has inspired the Epic of Atrahasis, and the composition of the Old Babylonian epic itself belong to the period in early antiquity when the population of Southern Mesopotamia reached its peak. This is precisely the period of time from which the documentary evidence concerning wet-nursing is especially extensive: it is the only period in the history of that region from which we have all of the following: legislation, contracts, litigation, and correspondence.¹²¹ Given the scientifically established fact that failure to nurse reduces dramatically the birth intervals and dramatically increases the population, it is reasonable to suggest that a significant factor in the phenomenal growth of the urban population of Southern Mesopotamia during the period in question may have been the handing over of the children of upper-class urban women to wet-nurses with the result that these women experienced significantly shorter birth-intervals.

In Biblical Israel, which was an essentially rural society, whose so-called cities were essentially villages,¹²² the tendency, encouraged by cultic law, was for women to nurse their own children. Therefore, these women, like their rural counterparts in

117 When it was 78.4 percent; see n. 119 for source.

118 When it was 50.2 percent; see next note for source.

119 Robert McC. Adams, *Heartland of Cities* (Chicago & London, 1981), 138b; see also idem, *Land Behind Baghdad: A History of Settlement on the Diyala Plains* (Chicago & London, 1965), 52; see now also J. Brinkman, "Settlement Surveys and Documentary Evidence: Regional Variation and Secular Trend in Mesopotamian Demography," *JNES* 43 (1983-84), 173: "The gross settled area of lower Mesopotamia—and presumably the population level—steadily decreased over a period of fifteen hundred years, from a high point in the period beginning ca. 2100 B.C. to a low point in the period ending ca. 625 B.C." There, p. 179, Brinkman also points out, "In the Ur region the gross occupation level peaks in the Old Babylonian rather than in Ur III times."

120 Hallo & Simpson, *The Ancient Near East*, 36, date the flood to ca. 2900 B.C.E., the beginning of the Early Dynastic period.

121 It is generally accepted in the historical demography of the ancient Near East that a built-up area of one dunam was inhabited by thirty to fifty persons. On this basis, it is estimated that during the reign of King David (ca. 1000-961 B.C.E.) Jerusalem had 2500 inhabitants while in Josiah's reign that city had 20,000 inhabitants. "An average-size settlement such as Tell Beit Mirsim, whose area was 30 dunams, did not exceed 1200-1500 inhabitants." Iron Age Babylon is estimated to have had 60,000-80,000 people; Nineveh 206,000 to 256,000. So Yigal Shiloh, "The Population of Iron Age Palestine, in the Light of a Sample Analysis of Urban Plans, Areas, and Population Density," *BASOR* 239 (1980), 30.

122 The correspondence includes *CT* 43, no. 31, pl. xiii, r. 7-9, in which Beltani tells Marat-bitim the following: *šumma tataplasma tul[û]ša lā damiq ana mušēniqti šanitimma šuḥaram idnī* "If you perceive

many parts of the world to this day, benefited significantly from the natural child-spacing afforded by lactational anovulation. This reality may account for the fact that Hebrew Scripture credibly portrays "Be fruitful and multiply" (Gen. 1:22, 28; 9:1, 7; 35:11; etc.) as a blessing while the Old Babylonian epic, reflecting a different reality, sees the unnatural growth of the population as a curse, threatening even the gods.

Interestingly, the one Biblical narrative, which, like Atrahasis, describes a phenomenal growth of the Hebrew population, is the only biblical narrative, which speaks of Hebrews' employing wet-nurses as a matter of course. In Exod. 1:7a we read as follows:

ובני ישראל פרו וישרצו וירבו ויעצמו במאד מאד

But the Israelites were fertile and prolific; they multiplied and increased very greatly.¹²³

The second of the verbs employed here, וִישְׂרָצוּ, lit., "they swarmed,"¹²⁴ suggests that the unnatural increase of the Hebrew population was "insect-like."¹²⁵ Attempting to account for this phenomenal increase, Rashi, following a midrash attributed to Rabbi Yannai in Midrash Tanḥuma at Exod. 1:7, suggests that the phenomenal increase in the population came about because each pregnancy resulted in the birth of sextuplets; the number six is alluded to by the six expressions, which follow רַבְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, "but the Israelites," in the quotation. Rashi's grandson, Samuel son of Meir (ca. 1085–1174) suggests that the following four factors would account for the phenomenal growth of the Hebrew population in Egypt: 1) more than the normal number of women conceived; 2) less than the normal number of women miscarried; 3) more than the normal number of children survived to adulthood; 4) the lifespan of the adults was unusually long. The latter factor alone would increase the pool of fertile women in their reproductive years, which, in turn, would lead to a marked increase in the number of pregnancies and births.¹²⁶

Samuel son of Meir's attempt to account for the phenomenal increase of the Hebrew population described in Exod. 1:7 adumbrates the following observations published by Frisch in 1975: 1) "A minimum level of stored energy [47 kg.] is required for the maintenance of regular ovulatory menstrual cycles" without which women cannot conceive; 2) "50,000 extra calories are needed to maintain a pregnancy to term"; and 3) "about 120,000 extra calories are needed for lactation over a minimum period of four months."¹²⁷ In other words, to achieve a phenomenal growth of

that her breast is not good (i.e., the child does not thrive on her milk), give the child to another wet-nurse." See also *CT* 43, no. 6, quoted above, n. 117. Lists of wages paid out to various kinds of workers including wet-nurses are attested in abundance not only from Southern Mesopotamia in the Old Babylonian period but also from Nuzi and from Alalakh VII; for listing of these texts see *CAD* M/2, 266.

123 NJV.

124 *BDB*, 1056b.

125 Similarly Moshe Greenberg, *Understanding Exodus* (New York, 1969), 19.

126 Cf. Birgitta Bucht and M. A. El-Badry, "Reflections on Recent Levels of Fertility and Mortality in Egypt," *Population Studies* 40 (1986), 101–13.

127 Rose E. Frisch, "Demographic Implications of the Biological Determinants of Female Fecundity," *Social Biology* 22 (1975), 17–22; see also G. S. Masnick, "The Demographic Impact of Breast Feeding: A Critical Review," *Human Biology* 51/2 (May 1979), 109–25; contrast J. Trussell, "Menarche and Fatness: Reexamination of the Critical Body Composition Hypothesis," *Science* 200 (1978), 1506–9; but see Rose E. Frisch, "Reply to J. Trussell," *Science* 200 (1978), 1509–13.

population by means of the factors enumerated by Samuel son of Meir the Hebrews of pre-enslavement Egypt would have required a level of nutrition commensurate with that of the most affluent of modern societies.

However, it has been demonstrated subsequently that “nutritional differences in populations . . . explain very little of the evident variation in fertility among populations.”¹²⁸ Hence, it seems more reasonable to look in the Biblical context of Exod. 1:7 for a simpler explanation of the phenomenal growth of the Hebrew population. Such an explanation is found in Exod. 2:7–9 in which the mother of Moses is convincingly portrayed as *אשה מינקת מן העבריות*, “a wetnurse from among the Hebrew women” and in which this alleged “wetnurse” enters into a legal contract as follows:

ותאמר-לה בת-פרעה היליכי את-הילד הזה
והינקוהו לי ואני אתן את-שכרך
ותקח האשה הילד ותנקהו

Pharaoh's daughter said to her, “Take this child, and nurse him for me, and I shall pay your wages.” So the woman took the child and she nursed it.¹²⁹

This dialogue suggests that the employment of wet-nurses by the affluent and the seeking of employment as wet-nurses on the part of the less affluent was taken for granted by all three of the parties involved because it was an established institution among Egyptian and Hebrew alike. If so, one may account for the phenomenal growth of the Hebrew population in pre-enslavement Egypt by reference to the well-established demographic consequences of the failure of women to take advantage of the contraceptive effect of natural nursing. Admittedly, such an interpretation of the story requires us to follow in the steps of the redactor who combined Exod. 1:7, which modern scholars assign to the P source, with Exod. 2:7–9, which scholars assign to E. However, if these two parts of the story are not combined, it is hard to understand the

128 J. Menken, J. Trussell, and S. Watkins, “The Nutrition Fertility Link: An Evaluation of the Evidence,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 7 (1981), 425–41; contrast Eric A. Roth, “The Demographic Study of Pastoral People,” *Nomadic Peoples* 20 (March 1986), 63–76.

129 While in the above text Pharaoh's daughter is unaware that the hired wet-nurse is in fact Moses' natural mother, the OB contract *TCL* 1 no. 146 tells of a natural mother's being deliberately hired by the adoptive mother to nurse the child. Lines 1–13 of the text in question read as follows: *Yabliatum* ¹*Alanitum* *mārassa ana Zamitum qadishti* ^d*Adad mārāt Aššat*-^d*Adad ana mārūša iddiššim tēniqam ša šattim* 3 *Yabliatum ummaša maḡrat arkišu Alanitum ana Zamitum ummiša ul ummī atī iqbabbīma ugallabšīma ana kaspim ina[ddiši]* “PN₁ gave PN₂ her daughter to PN₃, a devotee of Adad (who was) the daughter of PN₄, as her (legally adopted) daughter. PN₁, her (i.e., PN₂'s natural) mother received the wet-nursing fee for three years. Should PN₂ later say to PN₃, her (legally adoptive) mother, ‘You are not my (legal) mother,’ then they shall shave her (PN₂'s) head, and they shall sell her (into slavery) in exchange for silver.” With reference to the punishment prescribed here for the adoptive child's rejecting his/her adoptive parent see also *VS* 7, no. 73, lines 10–14; *Ana Ittishu* VII iii 23–33; see also *CAD* G, 130. For adoptive children being entrusted to wet-nurses in OB contracts see also *UET* 5, no. 97. *Ana Ittishu* VII iii 11–14 suggests that an adoptive mother may have chosen to nurse a child herself; there we read as follows: *qadisht[u šī] mār s[ūqi iššī]ma tulā šizib amēlūti [ušēniqāšu]* “[That] qadishtu [adopted] a foundling, and [she nursed him] at the breast with human milk.” On the nursing of adopted children by their adoptive mothers, see now Derrick B. Jelliffe and E. F. Patrice Jelliffe, *Human Milk in the Modern World* (Oxford, 1978), 366–67. On the other hand, *Ana Ittishu* III iii, like Exod. 2:7–9, refers to a foundling's being entrusted to the care of a paid wet-nurse.

circumstances under which baby Moses posed the threat to Egypt as the result of which he was adopted by Pharaoh's daughter.

Of the remaining three references to wet-nurses in Hebrew Scripture only one has its *Sitz-im-Leben* in the land of Israel. The extenuating circumstances under which King Joash of Judah (837–800 B.C.E.) was cared for by a wet-nurse are as follows. When Joash's father Ahaziah was murdered by King Jehu of Israel (842; 2 Kgs. 9:27; 2 Chr. 22:9), Joash's mother Athaliah, went on a homicide rampage, in which she killed off all members of the royal family on whom she could get her hands (2 Kgs. 11:1–2; 2 Chr. 22:10–11). It is reasonable to assume that Athaliah's victims included Joash's mother. Of the almost miraculous survival of Joash and the wet-nurse the following is reported in 2 Kgs. 11:2–3:

Jehosheba, the daughter of King Joram (and) the sister of Ahaziah, stealthily rescued Ahaziah's son Joash from among the princes who were being put to death, and [she put]¹³⁰ and his wetnurse in the bedroom, and they¹³¹ hid him from Athaliah so that he was not put to death. He was hiding with her¹³² six years in the Temple of the LORD while Athaliah ruled over the country.

As for Rebekah's famous wet-nurse, Deborah (Gen. 24:59; 35:8), it should be remembered that her functioning as a wet-nurse is associated in the Biblical record not with Iron Age Palestine but with Bronze Age Mesopotamia. Her life-long association with her nursling Rebekah, it should be noted, has a number of famous parallels in life and letters.¹³³

The remaining reference to wet-nurses in the Hebrew Scriptures is found in Isa. 49:23, a prophecy of consolation, spoken in Babylonia between September 539 and April 538 B.C.E.¹³⁴ Employing gender-matched synonymous parallelism,¹³⁵ Deutero-Isaiah suggests that Gentile kings will be the male deliverers of child care, presumably changing Israel's metaphoric diapers,¹³⁶ and that Gentile queens will be Israel's metaphoric wet-nurses. The verse reads as follows:

והיו מלכים אמניך ושרותיהם מניקתיך

Kings will be your male child-care personnel, and their queens will be your wet-nurses.

The notion, peculiar to Deutero-Isaiah, that subjugated Israel will emerge victorious as nurslings to be cared for by her erstwhile conquerors is reflected also in Isa. 60:16:

130 So NJV, which supplies this verb from 2 Chr. 22:11.

131 Cf. 2 Chr. 22:11: "Jehoshebeath, daughter of King Jehoram, wife of the priest Jehoida."

132 Cf. 2 Chr. 22:12: "with them."

133 E.g., Juliet's nurse in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*; Eurymedusa, who had nursed Nausicaa in the palace of Alcinous in Homer's *Odyssey*, Book 7; see also Stefano Guazzo, *The Civil Conversation* (1581), quoted in Joseph E. Illick, "Child-Rearing in Seventeenth Century England and America," in de Mause, ed., *History of Childhood*, 310.

134 Menahem Haran, *Between Ri'shonôt (Former Prophecies) and Ḥadashôt (New Prophecies)* (Jerusalem, 1963), 32 [in Hebrew].

135 See W. G. E. Watson, "Gender-Matched Synonymous Parallelism in the Old Testament," *JBL* 99 (1980), 321–41; Adele Berlin, "Grammatical Aspects of Biblical Parallelism," *HUCA* 50 (1979), 17–43.

136 On the role of males in the delivery of child-care in Hebrew Scripture, see now Brenda Forster, "The Biblical ʿōmēn and Evidence for the Nurturance of Children by Hebrew Males" (forthcoming).

You will suck the milk of nations.
 You will suck at the breasts of kings.
 Thus you will know that I, the LORD,
 am your Savior,
 and that your Redeemer is the Mighty
 One of Jacob.

וינקת חלב גוים ושרד¹³⁷ מלכים תינק¹³⁸
 וידעת כי אני ה' מושיעך
 וגאלך אביר יעקב

Isa. 66:10–13 combines three metaphors: 1) victorious Israel as nursling of erst-while conquerors; 2) Jerusalem as nursing mother of Israel;¹³⁹ and 3) God as mother¹⁴⁰ of Israel. There we read as follows:

שמחו את ירושלים וגילו בה כל-אהביה
 שישו אתה משרש כל-המתאבלים עליה
 למען תינקו ושבעתם משד תנחמיה
 למען תמצו והתענגתם מזיו כבודה
 כי כה אמר ה' הנני נטה-אליה כנהר שלום
 וכנחל שוטף כבוד גוים וינקתם
 על-צד תנשאו ועל-ברכים תשעשעו
 כאיש אשר אמו תנחמנו
 כן אנכי תנחמכם
 וכירושלים תנחמו

Rejoice with Jerusalem.
 Be glad for her, all you who love her.
 Exult with her, all you who mourned for her
 So that you may nurse and be satisfied from her breast of consolation,
 So that you may suck and be satiated from her glorious nipple.
 For thus says the LORD, "I hereby extend to her well-being like a stream,
 and the wealth of nations like a flowing river bed so that you may nurse.
 You will be carried on (her) hip, and you will be fondled on (her) knees.
 I will comfort you like a man, whose mother comforts him,
 and through Jerusalem you will be comforted."

137 The Massoretes seem to distinguish between the anatomical breast, *šād*, and the metaphorical breast, *šôd* (see Mandelkern, *Concordance*, 1150) just as Akkadian distinguishes between the anatomical hand, *rettu*, and the metaphorical hand *qātu*. While Heb. שד refers both to mother's breast, an organ of nourishment and consolation, and to lover's breast, an object of erotic interest to the male (Song 1:13; 7:8; etc.), the cognate טד refers exclusively to the breast of lover or wife as an object of erotic interest to the male; see Ezek. 23:3, 8, 21; Prov. 5:19.

138 On the parallelisms in this verse see M. Held, "The *yqtl-qtl (qtl-yqtl)* Sequence of Identical Verbs in Biblical Hebrew and in Ugaritic," in *Studies and Essays in Honor of Abraham A. Neumann*, ed. M. Ben-Horin, B. D. Weinryb, and S. Zeitlin (Leiden, 1962), 281–90; idem, "Additional Pairs of Words in Synonymous Parallelism in Biblical Hebrew and in Ugaritic," *Lēšonenu* 18 (1953), 146 [in Hebrew].

139 On Zion as mother in Isa. 66:10–13 and elsewhere see John J. Schmitt, "The Motherhood of God and Zion as Mother," *RB* 92 (1985), 557–69. While Isa. 49:23 pictures wet-nursing as a lowly occupation appropriate to be performed by the queens of vanquished nations as an aspect of their being subjugated, Isa. 66:10–13 suggests that Jerusalem breast-feeds Israel because she is their natural mother. On the other hand, in 4R 61 iii 25–26 the Assyrian goddess Ishtar of Arbela tells King Esarhaddon (680–669 B.C.E.), *mušē-niqtaka dēqtu anāku* "I am your excellent wet-nurse." Likewise, in the Neo-Babylonian text, *KAR* 307:19 it is stated, *Tī'amat šī mušēniqtu ša Bēl šī* "As for Tiamat, she is the wet-nurse of Bel (i.e., the lord, whose name is Marduk)." That supernatural beings are given over, like children of the upper classes, to wet-nurses is taken for granted in Lugal-e I, 27–28, which states that the *asakku*-demon is *māru ša ana mušēniqti lā ušbu ēniqtu* "a child, who did not stay with a wet-nurse, (for) he sucked the strength of the milk (i.e., he wore her out from relentless nursing)."

140 See, in addition to Mayer I. Gruber, "The Motherhood of God in Second Isaiah," *RB* 90 (1983), 351–59 and the literature cited there; Rashi at Ps. 131:2.