

Feeding Babies 1: Has It Always Been This Difficult?

Rabbanit Leah Sarna | Drisha Institute for Jewish Education | 29 Heshvan 5783

I. Shouldn't it be easier?

Niddah 9a

According to the statement of Rabbi Meir the case is that menstrual blood spoils and becomes milk.

Eruvin 54b

Rabbi Shmuel bar Nahmani said: What is the meaning of that which is written:... “Let her breasts satisfy you at all times”; **why were matters of Torah compared to a breast? Just as with a breast, whenever a baby searches it for milk to suckle, he finds milk in it, so too, with matters of Torah. Whenever a person meditates upon them, he finds new meaning in them.**

Proverbs 5:15-23

Drink water from your own cistern,
Running water from your own well.
Your springs will gush forth
In streams in the public squares. They will be yours alone,
Others having no part with you. Let your fountain be blessed;
Find joy in the wife of your youth— **A loving doe, a graceful mountain goat.**
Let her breasts satisfy you at all times;
Be infatuated with love of her always. Why be infatuated, my son, with a forbidden woman?
Why clasp the bosom of an alien woman? For a man's ways are before the eyes of God;
He surveys his entire course. The wicked man will be trapped in his iniquities;
He will be caught up in the ropes of his sin. He will die for lack of discipline,
Infatuated by his great folly.

Berakhot 31b

The Gemara continues to deal with Hannah's prayer. It is said: **“And Hannah spoke on her heart.” Rabbi Elazar said in the name of Rabbi Yosei ben Zimra:** Hannah spoke to God concerning matters of her heart. **She said before Him: Master of the Universe, of all the organs You created in a woman, You have not created one in vain.** Every organ fulfills its purpose; **eyes to see, ears to hear, a nose to smell, a mouth to speak, hands with which to perform labor, feet with which to walk, breasts with which to nurse.** If so, **these breasts that You placed upon my heart, to what purpose did You place them? Was it not in order to nurse with them? Grant me a son and I will nurse with them.**

נדה ט' א

לברי ר"מ דם נעקר ונעשה חלב

עירובין נ"ד ב

אמר רבי שמואל בר נחמני: מאי דכתיב... “דדיה ירוך ככל עת” — למה נמשלו דברי תורה כדד? מה דד זה כל זמן שהתינוק ממשיך בו — מוצא בו חלב, אף דברי תורה, כל זמן שאדם הוגה בהן — מוצא בהן טעם.

משלי ה': ט"ו-כ"ג

שתה מים מבגרה ונזלים מתוך בארה: ופוצו מעינתיה
תוצה ברחבות פלגי מים: יהיר לך לבך ואין לנרים אתך:
יהי מקורך כרוה וישמח מאשת נערה: **אגלת אהבים**
וישלת יתן דדיה ירוך ככל עת באהבה תשגה תמיד:
ולמה תשגה בני בערה ותחפז תח נכרה: פי נכח ו עיני
הנה דרכי איש וכל מעשיתיו מפלים: עונותיו ילכדנו
את הרשע וכתבלי טטאתו תמך: הוא גמות באין מוסר
וברב אולתו וישגה: {פ}

ברכות ל"א ב

“וחנה היא מדברת על לבה.” אמר רבי אלעזר משום רבי יוסי בן זמרא: על עסקי לבה. אמרה לפניו: רבוננו של עולם, כל מה שפראת באשה, לא פראת דבר אחד לבטלה: עינים לראות, ואזנים לשמוע, חוטים להרית, פה לדבר, ידים לעשות בהם מלאכה, רגלים להלך בהן, וידים להניק בהן. וידים הללו שנתת על לבי למה? לא להניק בהן! תן לי בן, ואניק בהן.

Lamentations 4:3-4

And suckle their young; But my poor people has turned cruel, Like ostriches of the desert. The tongue of the suckling cleaves To its palate for thirst. Little children beg for bread; None gives them a morsel.

Rashi on Lamentations 4:3:2

Yet the daughters of my people have become brutal. They see their children crying for bread, and yet no one breaks [bread] for them; for their own lives come before their children's lives because of the hunger.

Taanit 27b

§ **The Sages taught: The members of the priestly watch would pray for the offerings of their brothers**, the daily offering, **that it should be accepted with favor. And** meanwhile, **the members of the non-priestly watch** remained in their towns and would **assemble in the synagogue and observe four fasts: On Monday of that week, on Tuesday, on Wednesday, and on Thursday. On Monday** they would fast **for seafarers. On Tuesday** they would fast **for those who walk in the desert. On Wednesday** they would fast **over croup, that it should not befall the children. On Thursday** they would fast **for pregnant women and nursing women. For pregnant women they would fast that they should not miscarry, while for nursing women they would fast that they should be able to nurse their children properly. And on Shabbat eve they would not fast, in deference to Shabbat, and a fortiori** they would not fast **on Shabbat itself.**

Ketubot 64b

MISHNA: If someone feeds his wife by means of a third party serving as a trustee, while the husband himself is not living with her for some reason, he may not give her less than two *kav* of wheat or four *kav* of barley a week for her sustenance.... **And if he does not give her a silver *ma'a* coin for her needs, her earnings** belong to her. **And what** is the fixed amount **that she** must **earn for him?** She must spin wool in the **weight** of five *sela* of threads of the **warp in Judea, which** are equivalent to **ten sela** according to the measurements of the **Galilee, or the weight**

איכה ד':ג'-ד'

גם-תנין [תנים] תלצו שד היניקו גוריהן
בת-עמי לאכזר כי ענים [פיענים]
במדבר: (ס) דבק לשון יונק אל-חכו
בצמא עוללים שאלו להם פרש אין
להם: (ס)

רש"י על איכה ד':ג':ב'

בת עמי לאכזר. רואים את בניהם
צועקים להם, ואין פורש להם, שחניהם
קודמים להם לחי בניהם מחמת הרעב:

תענית כ"ז ב

תנו רבנן: אנשי משמר היו מתפללין על
קרבו אחיהם שיתקבל בראון. ואנשי
מעמד מתפנסין לבית הכנסת, ויושבין
ארבע תעניות: בשני בשבת, בשלישי,
ברביעי, ובחמישי. בשני — על יורדי
הים. בשלישי — על הולכי מדברות.
ברביעי — על אסקרא שלא תיפול על
התינוקות. בחמישי — על עוברות
ומיניקות. עוברות — שלא יפילו,
מיניקות — שניקו את בניהם. ובערב
שבת לא היו מתעניין מפני כבוד השבת,
קל וחומר בשבת עצמה.

כתובות ס"ד ב

מתני' המשורה את אשתו על ידי שלישי
— לא יפחות לה משני קבין חטין, או
מארבעה קבין שזורין... ואם אין נותן
לה מעה כסף לצורקה — מעשה ידיה
שלה.
ומה היא עושה לו? משקל חמש סלעים
שתי ביהודה, שהן עשר סלעים בגליל.
או משקל עשר סלעים ערב ביהודה, שהן
עשרים סלעים בגליל. ואם היתה מגיקה
— פוחתין לה ממעשה ידיה,

of **ten sela** of the threads of the **woof**, which are easier to prepare, **in Judea, which are** equivalent to **twenty sela** according to the measurements used in the **Galilee**. **And if she is nursing** at the time, the required amount **is reduced from her earnings and is added** to the sum she receives for **her sustenance**. **In what case is this statement**, i.e., all these amounts and measurements, **said? With regard to the poorest of Jews**, i.e., these are the minimum requirements. **However, in the case of a financially prominent man**, all the amounts are increased **according to his prominence**.

Ketubot 65b

If she is nursing, the required amount **is reduced from her earnings and is added** to the sum she receives for **her sustenance**. **What is the reason** for this? Is it **not because** the baby **needs to eat** together **with her**? This shows that a father is responsible to provide for his young child. The Gemara rejects this proof: **But perhaps** he increases her sustenance not due to the baby but **because she is** considered **ill** due to her weakness while nursing, in which case the obligation stems from his obligation to his wife, not to his child. The Gemara retorts: **If so, let the mishna teach: If she was ill. What is the reason** that it specifies: **If she was nursing?** The reason for this *halakha* must certainly be due to the child. The Gemara again rejects this answer: **But perhaps** the mishna **teaches us this**, that in an **ordinary** situation, **nursing women are** considered **ill**, and that a husband must increase the sustenance all the more so if his wife is actually ill. Consequently, this does not prove that a father is obligated to sustain his very young child. **It was stated that Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: Wine is added for a nursing woman, as wine is good for milk.**

II. The Alternatives

a. Formula

Yevamot 42a-42b

The Gemara suggests a different reason for the prohibition against marrying a woman who is pregnant with the child of another man: ... **Rather**, the reason for the prohibition is that a **typical pregnant woman is poised to nurse** her child once it is born; therefore, one should be concerned that **perhaps she will become pregnant and her milk will dry up** during pregnancy, **and** the lack of milk will **kill** her newborn child. The Gemara asks: **If so, even** if his wife is pregnant with **his own**

ומוסיפין לה על מזונותיה. במה דברים אמורים — בעניי שבִּישְׂרָאֵל, אֲבָל בְּמִכּוּבַד הַפֶּל לְפִי כְבוֹדוֹ.

כתובות ס"ה ב

הַיְתָה מְנִיקָה — פּוֹחֲתִין לָהּ מִמַּעֲשֵׂה יְדֵיהָ, וּמוֹסִיפִין לָהּ עַל מְזוֹנוֹתֶיהָ. מֵאֵי טַעֲמָא? לָאוּ מִשּׁוּם דְּרַבֵּי לְמִיכַל בְּהַדְרָה? וְדַלְמָא מִשּׁוּם דְּחֻלָּה הִיא. אִם כֵּן, לִיתְגַּי "אִם הַיְתָה חֻלָּה", מֵאֵי אִם הַיְתָה מְנִיקָה? וְדַלְמָא הָא קָא מְשַׁמַּע לֵן דְּסַתָּם מְנִיקוֹת חֻלּוֹת נִינְהוּ. אִיתְמַר, אָמַר רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן לֵוִי: מוֹסִיפִין לָהּ יַיִן, שְׂהֵיִן יָפָה לְחֵלְב.

יבמות מ"ב א-מ"ב ב'

אָלָא: סַתָּם מְעוּבָרַת לְמִנִּיקָה קִיִּמָּא, דַּלְמָא אֵיעֲבָרָה וּמַעֲכַר חֲלָבָה, וְקָטְלָה לִיהָ. אִי הָכִי, דִּידֵיהָ נִמְי! דִּידֵיהָ — מְמַסְמָסָא לִיהָ בְּבִיצִים. וְחֵלְב דִּידָה נִמְי, מְמַסְמָסָא לִיהָ בְּבִיצִים וְחֵלְב! לָא יָהֵב לָהּ בַּעַל. (וְלִיתְבַּעֲיָנָהּ) [וְתַתְּבַעֲיָנָהּ] לְיִוְרָשִׁים! אָמַר אַבְיִי: אִשָּׁה בּוֹשֶׁה לְבָא לְבֵית דִּין, וְהוֹרְגַת

child, the same concern applies. The Gemara explains: For **his own child, she will feed [memasmesa] him with eggs and milk** as a substitute for the mother's milk. The Gemara asks: Even if the child is not his, it is still the mother's child, and for **her child she will also feed him with eggs and milk**. The Gemara answers: **The husband will not give her** money to procure food for a child that is not his. The Gemara asks: **But she could sue** her first husband's **heirs** to provide subsistence for the child. **Abaye said: A woman is embarrassed to come to court, and** therefore she will not obtain enough sustenance for him. Consequently, **she effectively kills her son** as a result.

b. *Wet nurse*

Ketubot 60b:11-14

§ **The Sages taught:** If someone gave a child to a wet nurse, and she agreed **to nurse** him for payment, **she may not nurse her own child or another woman's child together with him**, in order that she not take away milk from the child she is being paid to nurse. Even **if she fixed a small allowance** for food with the payment for nursing, **she must nevertheless eat large quantities** so that she will have enough milk. And **she may not eat together with him**, i.e., while she is nursing the child, **things** that are **bad for her milk**. The Gemara asks about this *baraita*: **Now that you said** that she may **not nurse her own child** together with her client's child, **is it necessary** to say that she cannot nurse **another woman's child**? The Gemara answers: **Lest you say** that the prohibition is limited to **her child**, as there is a concern that since **she favors him, she will feed him more** milk than the other child, **but** with regard to **another woman's child, if she did not have surplus milk she would not feed him**, and therefore it should be permitted, the *baraita* therefore **teaches us** not to distinguish between the cases. The *baraita* said that even **if she fixed a small allowance** for food, **she must eat large quantities**. The Gemara asks: **From where** should she get this food if the allowance cannot cover it? **Rav Sheshet said: From her own funds**. Because she accepted an obligation to nurse the child, she must take the necessary steps to fulfill her obligation. The *baraita* said: **She may not eat together with him things** that are **bad for her milk**. The Gemara asks: **What are these** foods that are detrimental for milk? **Rav Kahana said: For example, hops; and young, green grain sprouts; small fish; and soil**. **Abaye said: Even pumpkin and quince**. **Rav Pappa said: Even pumpkin and palm branches** with small, unripe dates. **Rav Ashi**

כתובות ס' ב:א-י"ד

תנו רבנן: הרי שנתנו לה בן להניק —
הרי זו לא תניק עמו לא בנה ולא בן
תברתה. פסקה קימעה — אוכלת הרבה.
לא תאכל עמו דברים הרעים לחלב.
השתא בנה אמרת לא, בן תברתה
מיבעיא?! מהו דתימא: בנה הוא
דתיס[א] עילויה ממציא ליה טפי. אכל
בן תברתה, אי לאו דהנה לה מותר לא
הנה ממציא ליה, קא משמע לן. פסקה
קימעה — אוכלת הרבה. מהיכא? אמר
רב ששת: משלה. לא תאכל עמו דברים
הרעים. מאי נינהו? אמר רב פהנא: כגון
כשות וחוזו ודגים קטנים ואדמה. אבבי
אמר: אפילו קרא וחושא. רב פפא אמר:
אפילו קורא וכופרא. רב אשי אמר:
אפילו כמכא והרסנא. מיניהו פסקי
חלבא, מיניהו עברי חלבא.

said: Even *kutah* [*kamka*] and small fried fish. All these items are bad, as some cause milk to dry up and some cause milk to spoil.

Ketubot 61a:2

§ Rav Huna said: Rav Huna bar Hinnana tested us, by asking: If she says that she wants to nurse and he says that he does not want her to nurse but rather to give the child to a wet nurse, we accede to her desires, as she is the one suffering from engorgement of her breasts. However, if he says that he wants her to nurse and she says that she does not want to nurse, what is the *halakha*? He then narrowed the scope of the question: Anywhere that she is not accustomed, as the women of her family generally do not nurse their children but give them to wet nurses instead, we accede to her desires. However, if she is accustomed to nursing and he is not accustomed, i.e., the women of her family generally nurse their babies but the women in his family do not, what is the *halakha*: Do we follow his wishes to follow her family custom or do we follow her wishes to follow his family custom?

And we answered his question from this amoraic statement: When a woman marries a man, she ascends with him to his socioeconomic status, if it is higher than hers, but she does not descend with him if his status is lower. Consequently, if his family is not accustomed to nurse, she is not obligated to nurse either. Rav Huna said: What is the verse from which this is derived? It is derived from: “She is a man’s wife” (Genesis 20:3). The Gemara explains: The word used here for “wife [*be’ula*]” hints through similar spelling that she ascends in status with the ascension [*aliya*] of her husband but does not descend with the descent of her husband. Rabbi Elazar said: There is a hint to this principle from here: “As she was the mother of all living” (Genesis 3:20), which indicates that she was given to her husband for living with him, but was not given to suffer pain with him.

c. Friend-Nurse

Tosefta Ketubot 5:3

A man cannot force his wife to nurse the son of his fellow, and a wife can't force her husband [to allow her to] nurse the son of her fellow.

d. Other Animals

כתובות ס"א א:ב'

אמר רב הונא, בדיק לן רב הונא בר חיננא: היא אומרת להניק, והוא אומר שלא להניק — שומעין לה. צערא דידה הוא. הוא אומר להניק, והיא אומרת שלא להניק, מהו? כל היכא דלא אורחה — שומעין לה. היא אורחה והוא לא אורחיה, מאי? בתר דידיה אַזלינן, או בתר דידיה אַזלינן?

ופשיטנא ליה מהא: עולה עמו ואינה יורדת עמו. אמר רב הונא: מאי קראתה — “והיא בעולת בעל”, בעלייתו של בעל, ולא בירידתו של בעל. רבי אלעזר אמר מהכא: “כי היא היתה אם כל חי”, לחיים ניתנה, ולא לצער ניתנה.

תוספתא כתובות ה' ג'

אין האיש כופה את אשתו שתניק את בן חברו ואין האשה כופה את בעלה שתניק את בן חברתה.

Yevamot 114a:8

Come and hear: A child may regularly suckle from a...non-kosher animal. And in both cases one need not be concerned that he might be considered one who suckles from a detestable creature. But one may not feed a child unslaughtered animal carcasses, or animals with wounds that will cause the animals to die within twelve months [tereifot], or repugnant creatures, or creeping animals. A child may suckle from all these, including the non-kosher creatures, even on Shabbat.

e. Chestfeeding

Shabbat 53b:17-19

The Gemara cites a related *baraita* in which the Sages taught: There was an incident where one man's wife died, and she left him a son to nurse, and he did not have money to pay the wages of a wet-nurse. And a miracle was performed on his behalf, and he developed breasts like the two breasts of a woman, and he nursed his son. Rav Yosef said: Come and see how great this person is that a miracle of that magnitude was performed on his behalf. Abaye said to him: On the contrary, how dishonorable is this person that the order of creation was altered on his behalf. A miracle was indeed performed on his behalf; however, it was performed in a demeaning and unpleasant manner. Rav Yehuda added and said: Come and see how difficult it is to provide for a person's sustenance. It is so difficult that the order of creation had to be altered on his behalf, which was apparently easier than providing him a source of financial support. Rav Nahman said: Know that it is so, as miracles are often performed on a person's behalf; however, it has not yet happened that food was miraculously created in a person's home.

f. Tube Feeding

רבי יהודה אומר, מי אמר קלוס להקדוש ברוך הוא, התינוקות, אותן שהיה פרעה מבקש להשליך ליאור שהם מכירין להקדוש ברוך הוא. כיצד, כשהיו ישראל במצרים והיתה אשה מבנות ישראל מבקשת לילד, והיתה יוצאת לשדה ויולדת שם, וכיון שהיתה יולדת, עוזבת הנער ומוסרת אותו להקדוש ברוך הוא, ואומרת רבון העולם, אני עשיתי את שלי ואתה עשה את שלך. אמר רבי יוחנן, מיד היה יורד הקדוש ברוך הוא בכבודו פכיכול וחותר טבורו ומרחיצו וסכו, ... והיה נותן שני טבריו בידו אחד מניקו שמו ואחד מניקו דבש, שנאמר (דברים לב, יג): וינקהו דבש מסלע, והיו גדלים בשדה, שנאמר (יחזקאל טז, ז): רבבה כצמח השדה נתתיה, וכיון שהיו גדליו היו נכנסין לבתיהן אצל אבותיהן והיו שואלין להם מי היה זקוק לכם, והיו אומרים להם בחור אחד נאה ומשבח היה יורד ועושה לנו כל

יבמות קי"ד א'ה'

תא שמע: יונק תינוק והולך...מבמה טמאה, ואין חוששין ביונק שקץ. ולא יאכילנו נבלות וטרפות שקצים ורמשים. ומכילן יונק מהם ואפילו בשבת.

שבת נ"ג ב'י"ז-י"ט

תנו רבנן: מעשה באחד שמתה אשתו והניקה בן לינק ולא היה לו שכר מניקה ליתן, ונעשה לו גם ונפתחו לו דדין כשני דדי אשה והניק את בנו. אמר רב יוסף: בא וראה כמה גדול אדם זה שנעשה לו גם כזה! אמר ליה אביי: אדרבה כמה גרוע אדם זה שנשתמו לו סדרי בראשית. אמר רב יהודה: בא וראה כמה קשים מזונותיו של אדם, שנשתמו עליו סדרי בראשית. אמר רב נחמן: תדע, דמתרחיש גיפא ולא אברו מזוני.

שמות רבה כ"ג:ה'

צָרְכֵינוּ... וְכִיּוֹן שָׁבָאוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל לַיָּם הָיוּ אוֹתָן הַתִּינוּקוֹת שֶׁשָׁם וְהֵם רָאוּ לְהַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא בֵּינָם הַתְּחִילוּ אוֹמְרִים לְאַבֹּתֵיהֶם
זֶהוּ אוֹתוֹ שֶׁהָיָה עוֹשֶׂה לָנוּ כָּל אוֹתוֹ הַדְּבָרִים כְּשֶׁהָיִינוּ בְּמִצְרַיִם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: זֶה אֵלֵי וְאַנְוָהוּ.

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