ArtScroll is in the final stages of preparation of a brand new volume, *Nishmas*, illustrating the glory of this special tefillah through commentary, insight and inspiration.

As he finished writing the manuscript, the author, Yisroel Besser, sent an inquiry to Rav Chaim Kanievsky to determine exactly where one’s personal recital of *Nishmas* should end and whether it concludes as shown in *siddurim* at the end of *Pesukei Dezimrah* of Shabbos. Interestingly, Rav Chaim responded that it continues until the word *boruch* in the tefillah of Yishtabach.

Rav Chaim questioned, “Are you asking because of this week’s *parshah*?”

Rabbi Shai Graucher, who had presented the query, wasn’t sure what Rav Chaim meant.

Rav Chaim explained that in this week’s *parshah*, Parshas Toldos, the pasuk states, וַיֶּעְתַּר יִצְחָק ה’ לְנֹכַח אִשְׁתּוֹ כִּי עֲקָרָה הִוא וַיֵּעָתֶר לוֹ ה’ וַתַּהַר רִבְקָה אִשְׁתּוֹ — And Yitzchak entreated Hashem for his wife because she was barren, and Hashem let Himself be entreated of him, and Rivkah his wife conceived.

Rav Chaim Palagi (Chaim L’Rosh), who Rav Chaim Kanievsky quoted, explains that this is why in certain *siddurim*, in the final twelve words of Shochein Ad, יְשָׁרִים בְּפִי יְשָׁרִים רבכה בְּפִי יְשָׁרִים, eight letters are printed in bold, spelling וֹתּוֹ וַיֶּעְתַּר יִצְחָק ה’ לְנֹכַח אִשְׁתּוֹ, just as Yitzchak and Rivkah prayed to Hashem in their time of travail and were answered, so should we merit our own yeshuos.

Yitzchak and Rivkah, whose ordeal is described in this week’s *parshah*, are linked to *Nishmas*, for they were the personification of expressing boundless praise to the Ribono Shel Olam at all times, in all circumstances, and despite all trials and tribulations.

This revelation from Rav Chaim was incredibly timed, as this new volume of *Nishmas* was going to press during the very week of the *parshah* of לְנֹכַח אִשְׁתּוֹ.

We know that there are no coincidences – ever. This eye-opening insight being revealed to the ArtScroll team by Rav Chaim this week is a demonstration of this.
RIVKAH’S QUESTION

The Torah relates Rivkah’s anxiety and confusion about the children she was carrying. As Rashi relates, when she went by the Torah schools of Sheim and Eiver, Yaakov struggled to get out, and when she went by temples of idol worship, Eisav tried to get out.

Let us consider carefully the question Rivkah asks: לֹּאִי אָנֹכִי – If so, why am I thus? which means, “Why has this happened to me?” Normally, the word this is used to refer to a tangible object, something at which we can point. (Thus, at the Pesach Seder, we lift up the matzah and say, “This matzah,” or the marror and say, “This marror.”) To what was Rivkah referring when she said, “Why has this happened to me?”

The sages often interpreted the word נַפְלֵה, this, as referring to the number twelve, its numerical value. In our verse, then, we may suggest that נַפְלֵה refers to the twelve tribes of Klal Yisrael.

At this point, Rivkah thought that she was carrying only one child, who she knew through prophesy would be the father of the Jewish people. She was confused, because this child seemed to be drawn to both Torah and idol worship, and this prospect troubled her greatly. Idol worship is a terrible thing in itself, as she knew from her childhood as Lan’s sister. However, she also knew that someone who applied Torah knowledge to idolatry was far worse.

Therefore, she went to Sheim, the leading Torah scholar of the time, to ask what Hashem was doing.

Now, we can understand the question Rivkah asked Hashem: לֹּאִי אָנֹכִי – I am Hashem, your G-d, if they keep wanting to run after idols?

To this, Sheim answered that she was really carrying two children, who would father two nations, one of which would devote itself to Torah and the other to idolatry.

THE ‘HOLDING’ IN THE SUGYA.

When Yeshivas Mir Yerushalayim was learning Maasehes Yevamos, one of its legendary maggidei shiur, Rav Asher Arieli, wanted to cite a famous but troubling thought from Rav Shlomo Heiman. Before doing so, Rav Asher approached one of the Ner Yisroel talmidim in Yeshivas Mir and asked him to call Rav Yaakov Moshe Kulefsky and hear the piece straight from a talmid of Rav Shlomo. Rav Asher was hoping that after he heard it from the Ner Yisroel talmid, he himself would gain some clarity.

When the young man called his rebbi, he was surprised when Rav Kulefsky replied, “I’m sorry, but I can’t help you. I’m not ‘holding’ in the sugya. To ‘say over’ a ‘Rav Shlomo’, a vort from my rebbi, I have to be ‘holding’ in the sugya.”

The bachur was not satisfied with the answer. He knew that Rav Kulefsky knew the piece from Rav Shlomo quite well; he was “holding” everywhere. Nevertheless, if Rav Kulefsky wasn’t going to tell it to him, he had to relay the message to Rav Asher.

Though most likely disappointed, Rav Asher was impressed that there are those who still hold their rebbi’s Torah in such high esteem that they will not repeat it unless they are “holding” there.

Five months later, at the end of winter zeman, this young man returned home to Baltimore and walked into the mailroom, where Rav Kulefsky used to learn. Before he was even able to get out a shalom aleichem, Rav Kulefsky came charging toward him. “I’ll tell you what Rav Shlomo said...” He proceeded continued on page 3
In this week’s Daf Yomi, the Gemara states (Eravin 100b): Even if the Torah had not been given to the Jewish people, we would [have been able to] learn [the concept of] modesty from a cat [which relieves itself in a modest fashion], [the prohibition of] theft from an ant [which never steals from a fellow ant]....

The Gemara charges us with learning proper middos (character traits) from the animals around us. To be sure, this is no easy task, because the wonders of the natural world have become so commonplace that people have become accustomed to them and tend to take them for granted.

Rav Elazar Menachem Man Shach once described in a mussar talk to his students his practice of studying the pictures of birds and animals that are often printed in newer editions of Chumash Vayikra. These pictures offer a sampling of the incredible variety of animal life in the world, and the unfathomable Divine wisdom that went into fashioning each creature in just the form it needs to feed itself and maintain its existence. By his own account, he would undertake this study during the short breaks between sections of the Torah reading, and he would become so engrossed that he would have a hard time pulling away from it (Machsheves Mussar, Vol. 2, pp. 490-491; see also Machsheves Zekeinim, pp. 131-132, 167-168).

According to many commentaries, this is the main purpose of Perek Shirah, an ancient Midrashic work that lists the praises that are “sung” to Hashem by various animals, plants, and other denizens of the natural world. The point is to observe the uniqueness of each creation and the specific message it teaches us in the form of its “song.” Every living creature can be utilized for spiritual growth. From analyzing a bird’s behavior, we might acquire a good middah. From studying a fish, we can extract a pearl of wisdom. And from examining an insect, we may gain true inspiration. Thus, by analyzing each creature’s song and nature, we can learn to better serve Hashem. Each of these creatures is restricted to its own particular virtue. Man has the ability to combine the lessons from all the other creatures and aggregate them into his character. This ability is in fact a mark of man’s superiority (Sefer Ha’ikkarim 3:1).

This explains a surprising statement found in the introduction to Perek Shirah: “Anyone who occupies himself with Perek Shirah daily is (assured of a place in) the World to Come.” What is so special about reciting the songs of the animals that merits this extraordinary reward? The key words here are “occupies himself.” In other words, merely reciting the words is not sufficient; one must delve into this study in a concerted effort to derive the proper lessons from the various creatures that sing the praise of their Creator. Such a person will indeed grow to become worthy of the highest levels of the World to Come (Kenaf Renanim, Pesichah).
Why was the older baby called Eisav?
Because he was hairy, like a grownup. The word Eisav has the letters of the Hebrew word “asui,” which means “completely made.” He was a baby who looked like he had been born already finished – like a grownup who already has hair.

Why didn’t Hashem want Yitzchak to leave Eretz Yisrael?
Because at the Akeidah, Yitzchak had become holy, like a sacrifice. Someone so holy was not allowed to leave the holiness of Eretz Yisrael.

Where did Yaakov get the wine he served his father?
An angel brought the very special wine. It was more than 2,000 years old! It was made from grapes that Hashem created when He made the world.

Even though the Jews have done so much good for the world, still, in every time and place, there has been anti-Semitism. Hatred of the Jews has been around for thousands of years, and we still see it in so many places! Why is that?
Our Sages tell us that there is an unbroken rule: “Eisav sonei es Yaakov — Eisav hates Yaakov.”

Anti-Semitism can’t be wiped out until Mashiach comes.

The city of Beersheva is very ancient, and still exists today. It’s located in the southern part of Eretz Yisrael and is one of its largest cities, with over 200,000 people. There are two events in our Torah that the city is named for:* Avraham and Avimelech swore to each other in Beersheva that they would keep the peace between them. Later, Yitzchak and Avimelech also promised each other in Beersheva to keep the peace. The Hebrew word for swearing is “shavuah,” which has the same letters as the Hebrew word “sheva,” in the name Beersheva (just pronounced differently).

Imagine eating something like this. The first spoonful tastes like sushi, the second like a barbecued steak, the third like chocolate cake. Every spoonful tastes like something different. It would be the best meal ever.

That was the kind of meal Yitzchak had when he ate Yaakov’s food. The food was like the manh. It tasted like any food that Yitzchak wanted to taste. It was the best meal he ever had!