

power
potential

THE YESHIVAH



Mishpacha

With an intricate structure, wide range of sources, and rich trove of anecdotes, **Rav Aaron Lopiansky's** newest sefer provides a guide for yeshivah bochurim embarking on their pivotal journey of self-discovery. And along with the big-picture map he paints, there's a missive as well: for today's yeshivah bochur to realize his potential, he must take an active role in the journey. Because while the yeshivah provides him with tools, mentors, and support, ultimately the ben yeshivah must exercise his own initiative to chart the path to his destiny

journey to
SELE

By **Shmuel Botnick**



PHOTO: ELCHANAN KOTLER

“Going to yeshivah today is as expected as going to Brooklyn College was in my day.”

So says Rav Aaron Lopiansky, rosh yeshivah of Yeshiva Gedolah of Greater Washington.

Had Rav Lopiansky followed the standard path of his era, much would look different today. It would likely be someone else serving at the helm of Yeshiva of Greater Washington, various Torah websites would have thousands fewer *shiurim*, and seforim stores would be stocked with significantly fewer seforim.

But Rav Lopiansky chose to buck the common trend and enroll in yeshivah. It was a sacrifice on his part, but even more so on the part of his parents. For them, sending their son across the ocean meant overcoming the strongest of human emotions.

Rav Lopiansky's father, Reb Bentzion, had lost his first wife and children in the

Holocaust. He struggled mightily to overcome the relentless longing for the past, for the sake of rebuilding a future. It was a play performed in a DP camp that infused him with the encouragement to move forward. The actors depicted the scene of a survivor, grappling with the notion of remarrying, stepping away from his past. He ultimately chooses to remarry, and at the chuppah the souls of his martyred children arrive to wish him *mazel tov*.

Deeply moved by this scene, Reb Bentzion turned to the man sitting next to him. “*Du herst? Zei vellen nuch kumen vintchen mazel tov!* You hear, they will come back to wish us *mazel tov!*”

He marshalled the courage to begin again and married Esther Berliner, a fellow survivor. The couple were blessed with two children, Aaron Shraga and Aryeh Leib.

If sacrifice defined their marriage, it would dictate their *chinuch* as well. While their children demonstrated the talent and intellect to do phenomenally well in many professions, neither wished to pursue a college degree. They wanted to go to yeshivah. In his book *Seeds of Redemption*, Rav Lopiansky discusses the great sacrifices his mother made for the sake of helping others. He writes:

But all of this sacrifice pales in comparison to the ultimate sacrifice that she made for us. When I graduated high school I was not yet seventeen. I wanted to go to Eretz Yisrael to learn (very uncommon in those days) and she (and my father) agreed. It was not quite the life that she envisioned for me. It meant that instead of them retiring comfortably, with the children helping them, they would be the ones to occasionally help us. It meant that the only really bright spot in their lives — their two children — would have only been with them but 17 years, and thereafter, the relationship would be based on letters, pictures, and the all-too-rare visit. Although officially I was only going “for a year,” deep down in her heart of hearts my mother knew that it meant “forever.” And she consented.

It was this sacrifice that led to so much Torah, so many *shiurim*, such popular seforim.

But perhaps its most direct effect is Rav Lopiansky's latest sefer, *Ben Yeshivah, Pathway of Aliyah*.

As the yeshivah system continues to flourish, and the numbers of *talmidim* swell exponentially, Rav

Lopiansky has sensed a void in the very quality that founded his own growth — sacrifice, and the sense of initiative that comes with it. Going to yeshivah has become par for the frum teen's course — the sacrifice is no longer, and with it has gone the drive and self-determination.

Rav Lopiansky's newest sefer presents a roadmap to help *talmidim* navigate the yeshivah years.

The bochur who rises above trends and takes matters into his own hands needn't be a thing of the past.

Even as the yeshivah world continues to thrive, every bochur can pave his own pathway to *aliyah*.

“**T**he writing of the sefer began during Covid, when the yeshivah wasn't having regular sessions and things were less hectic,” says Rav Lopiansky. “But it was really the product of thirty years' worth of teaching.”

Rav Lopiansky is a son-in-law of the late rosh yeshivah of the Mir, Rav Beinish Finkel *ztz"l*. Following his marriage, he continued to learn in the Mir before accepting a position to serve as rosh yeshivah of Yeshiva Gedolah of Greater Washington, located in Silver Spring, Maryland. But an ocean's distance has done little to dampen his connection with his alma mater. In heart and in spirit, Rav Lopiansky remains bound to the Mir, and on an operational level, he conducts the *farhers* for the Mir's American applicants.

Decades of teaching his own *talmidim*, as well as his exposure to hundreds of *talmidim* from other yeshivos, have lent Rav Lopiansky a closeup view of the mechanics of success and the recipe for failure. And, he says, it all comes down to a single value: *achrayus*, a sense of personal responsibility.

“A bochur cannot depend on his yeshivah to automatically produce the entirety of his growth,” he says. “The yeshivah provides the tools and the guidance, but ultimately it is the bochur himself who will have to take charge of his own development in *ruchniyus*.”

The miraculous blossoming of today's yeshivah world has almost paradoxically made this objective less attainable.



A bochur cannot depend on his yeshivah to automatically produce the entirety of his growth”



Had Rav Aaron not bucked the trend of his era, there would likely be someone else serving at the helm of Yeshiva of Greater Washington

“In Europe, only a select few were sent to yeshivah,” Rav Lopiansky explains. “Most others went to work somewhere around bar mitzvah age. Any bochur in yeshivah had a question he had to answer: ‘Why am I here?’ And the answer to that question was, ‘Because I am special. I have the capacity to become a great *talmid chacham*.’ This insight charged a bochur with a tremendous sense of *achrayus*.”

Rav Lopiansky shares a story that brings this very point to life.

“We once had a question and answer forum at a yeshivah Melaveh Malkah, and one of the questions raised was, ‘What is the point of yeshivah?’ I said, ‘Excellent. How about you tell me?’

“Some of the bochurim gave me very rote answers, simply repeating what they had heard. Two of them, on the other hand, seemed very angry and expressed how they actually don’t believe that they should be in yeshivah. Those two,” says Rav Lopiansky, “ended up doing better than the others.”

Because once they were forced to justify their tenure in yeshivah, they took *achrayus*. And *achrayus* is the key to success.

A bochur’s initial foray into yeshivah, Rav Lopiansky writes, can be best described with a term found in Chazal: *yom omdo al daato*, the day one stands upon his own intellect. A newborn infant is entirely dependent upon his parents; as he grows, so does his sense of self. A boy’s entry to yeshivah presents a critical juncture in this regard, ushering in a new era of independence.

In *Ben Yeshivah, a Pathway of Aliyah*, Rav Lopiansky provides what he refers to as a “guide” for achieving that mindset. “Not a ‘how-to’ guide or a ‘why to’ guide,” he writes, “but rather an attempt to understand emotionally and intellectually, ‘What am I doing?’”

The answer, in short, is that you’re journeying. And the final destination of this journey, says Rav Lopiansky, is not distant at all. It is, in fact, as close as a destination can be.

Yourself.

The journey of life is the journey to self.

This, he explains, is the depth of Hashem’s

“You had to think on your own. Of course there were rebbeim, but the expectation was that you yourself would take charge of your development”

commandment to Avraham Avinu.

Avraham Avinu was 75 years old. He had pondered the world and had come to a crystal-clear understanding of Hashem as the Creator and Master of the world. He had risked his life and suffered being ostracized from society and persecuted for his “outrageous” beliefs. Finally, with the bold decision to risk everything for these beliefs, Avraham was ready for the *devar Hashem*. What were the first recorded words Hashem said to him? “*Lech lecha*,” which Rashi interprets as: “Go journey forth — for your benefit and your pleasure!” A quite literal interpretation of these words is, “Journey to yourself.”

But doesn’t it sound terribly conceited to make “yourself” the end goal? It isn’t, says Rav Lopiansky. Because your true self is that spark within you that is wholly Divine. Each one of us contains a *cheilek Eloka mi’maal*, a portion of G-d from On High. By journeying to ourselves — actualizing that hidden potential — we are, in effect, journeying toward Hashem.

It is this journey that defined Avraham Avinu’s life’s mission — and it is this journey that should define the focus of the years spent in yeshivah.

Thirty years of teaching may have been the bedrock for the book’s formation, but in truth, the process began decades earlier.

“In terms of mentors, I had quite a few,” says Rav Lopiansky. “I was a *talmid* of Rav Zeidel Epstein in RJJ (Yeshivas Rabbeinu Yaakov Yosef). I recognized his *taharah*, his *emes*, his wisdom, his *l’Sheim Shamayim*. He was a great inspiration in my early years of development.”

Following RJJ, a young Aaron Lopiansky moved on to the Mir, where he met a man he describes as “larger than life.”

“Rav Nochum was completely engrossed in learning,” Rav Lopiansky recalls of the Mir’s foremost *maggid shiur* at the time, Rav Nochum Partzovitz *ztz”l*. Rav Nochum became Rav Lopiansky’s rebbi in terms of developing a *mehalech halimud*, embedding in him a deep appreciation for the “*Mirrer derech*.”

But a central component to the intense spiritual impact those years had was something less tangible than the exhilarating *shiurim*. In chapter two of the *sefer*, Rav Lopiansky paints a vivid picture of the

yeshivah’s atmosphere at that time:

When I came to the Mir in 5730 (1970), the norm was to go home once every two years. It was extremely rare for someone to go home for a *simchah*, even for a close relative. Not only did cell phones not exist, but even a landline connection to America was only possible in the main post office. This meant that we lived and breathed learning, davening, and Yiddishkeit. Even the bochurim who were less diligent students were not part-time residents of another world. Their world was also the yeshivah; they just were less active participants. All our news was yeshivah news. All our excitement was yeshivah excitement. If R’ Nochum conveyed an astounding *chiddush*, it was the “talk of the town.” If R’ Chaim made a particularly powerful point in his *shmuess*, everyone would be discussing it. A new *sefer* was newsworthy, and so was a new *psak* (either *l’chumra* or *l’kula*). In short, the center of the world was *ruchniyus*.

Rav Nochum became Rav Lopiansky’s rebbi, teaching him so much Torah — but in an ironic way, teaching more by that which he didn’t teach.

“Rav Nochum’s *mehalech*, and really the *mehalech* of the Mir in general, was that you had to think on your own. Of course there were rebbeim, but the expectation was that you yourself would take charge of your development.”

Rav Nochum was a prize student of the great rosh yeshivah of Kaminitz, Rav Boruch Ber Leibowitz *ztz”l*. “At times, he would learn up a *sugya* like Rav Boruch Ber,” says Rav Lopiansky. “But there were times when he would say *Ich farshetei nisht* — I don’t understand’ the approach of his rebbi, and he would go on to present his own approach.”

That, too, held a lesson. “A *talmid* was expected to be an active participant in his growth,” Rav Lopiansky says. “It wasn’t something exclusively in the hands of his rebbi.”

Rav Nochum’s father-in-law, Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz *ztz”l*, who was the rosh yeshivah of the Mir at the time, expressed this ideal in one of his *shmuessen*.

“Rav Chaim once presented a contradiction,” Rav Lopiansky shares. “The Gemara quotes Rabi Eliezer as saying that he never said anything *shelo shama mei’rabo* — that he did not hear from his rebbi.’ However, in *Avos D’Rabi Nosson*, we are told of an instance where Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai asked a question of Rabi Eliezer and Rabi Eliezer

proceeded to share ideas *‘shelo shma’atan ozen mei’olam* — that no ear has ever heard.”

How do we reconcile these two *ma’amarei Chaza!*? Did Rabi Eliezer share his own novel ideas, or was he completely subordinate to his rebbi?

“Rav Chaim explained that being close to a rebbi doesn’t mean being a tape recorder. He would say that when he was a *talmid* in the Mir, there were bochurim who wrote every single word that the mashgiach, Rav Yerucham, said. ‘But what became of them?’ he asked. Then he said, ‘But you know what I did? I ate Melaveh Malkah with him.’”

Copious note-writing allows you to memorialize your rebbi’s words — but, said Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz, that won’t lead to greatness. It’s the “eating Melaveh Malkah” together, the input and effort that you invest, that allows one to achieve greatness.

Rabi Eliezer submitted himself to his rebbi, but in an active, rather than passive, way. The Torah he shared evolved from this joint venture, allowing it to be both his rebbi’s and his own.

In terms of the *talmid*-rebbe relationship, Rav Lopiansky states that there is a common misconception. “We use the terms, ‘shaping a bochur,’ or ‘molding a bochur.’ We have to recognize that a bochur is an individual — we can’t unilaterally ‘mold’ him. He has to want it; he has to make himself a *kli kibul* to receive that which we are providing him.”

In other words, he has to take *achrayus*.

In the sefer, Rav Lopiansky lays out the areas that should be part of a yeshivah bochur’s “itinerary” on this journey toward his fully-actualized self. The list includes learning *b’iyun*, learning *b’chavrusa*, learning *bekius*, learning halachah, Chumash, mussar, and *sifrei machshavah*, developing his tefillah, and more.

Learning Gemara *b’iyun*, Rav Lopiansky acknowledges, is the mainstay of the yeshivah curriculum. In-depth learning is what makes the words of Torah “come alive” — but, he cautions, it carries the risk of a basic misperception of “depth.” One cannot plunge to the depths of something without first having pierced the surface. “Torah is a structure,” he writes. “The taller and more complex the structure, the stronger we must lay the foundation.”

That foundation is “knowing the Gemara very well.” Rav Lopiansky explains that this isn’t merely because everything is built on the Gemara. Since all of the “in-depth” learning has the ultimate goal of understanding the Gemara with utmost truth and clarity, an initial first step must be to “know” the Gemara well. Only then can you move on to “understanding” it well.

Once the Gemara is thoroughly studied and reviewed, Rav Lopiansky prescribes a four-step process to help ensure clarity. One should ask themselves:

A) *What is the point or “title” of the sugya?*

B) *What is the bottom line? Note: “unresolved” is also an appropriate answer.*

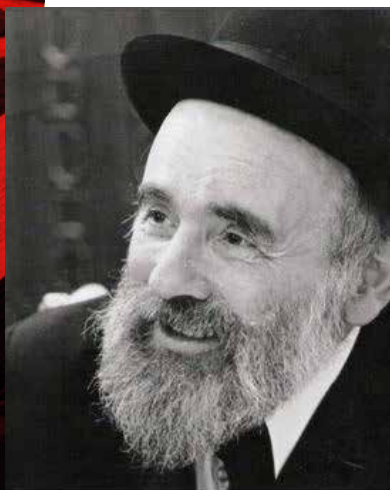
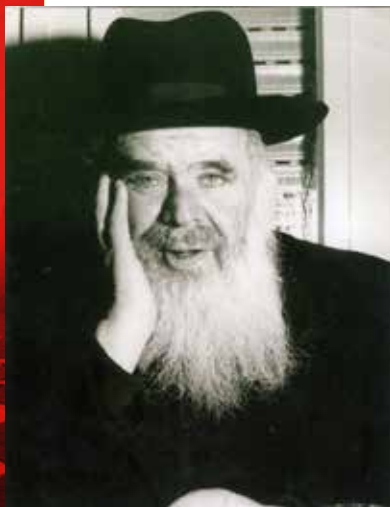
C) *What were the different possible proofs offered, and how were they rejected?*

D) *What halachos can we derive from the rejections? (i.e., The Gemara may explain that the halachah does not apply in certain cases.)*

Through learning *b’iyun*, one’s Torah “comes alive.” And a rebbi plays a critical role in making that happen.

“A good rebbi turns his *shiur* into a ‘war zone,’” Rav Lopiansky writes, “with *kushyos* and *teirutzim* flying about.” A *shiur* that percolates with questions, answers, proofs, and refutations holds a significant advantage over one delivered in static format.

This description is actually an apt reflection of Rav Lopiansky’s own *shiur*. “Rav Lopiansky’s



Rav Lopiansky notes that had he quite a few mentors, among them his father-in-law, Rav Beinush Finkel, Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz and Rav Nochum Partzovitz, all of them *roshei yeshivah* of Mir

shiur would begin with a list of questions,” recalls a *talmid*, Reb Mordechai Linzer, currently serving as rosh kollel of Torah Temimah Yerushalayim. “He would then turn to us, waiting to hear what we had to say.” As the level of animation grew, the sense of “life” inherent in the Torah grew that much more tangible. While the slow, arduous process of learning *b’iyun* is fundamental, Rav Lopiansky dedicates another chapter to the importance of learning *bekius*. This does not mean “learning quickly.” As he puts it, “rote memorization or mindless reading of material is like gulping down food without chewing or digesting it.”

In fact, proper learning of *bekius* requires a bochur to demand clarity, making sure to go through each point of the *sugya* methodically. It also requires *chazarah* — Rav Lopiansky recommends reviewing a *sugya* seven or eight times until one can recite the *shakla v’tarya* by heart. And thirdly, he strongly recommends self-testing.

In his chapter on halachah, Rav Lopiansky shares an alarming story. He describes how he once encountered a rosh yeshivah who “looked shell-shocked.”

I asked him what happened. He told me that he had been speaking in learning with three bochurim who probably represented the solid middle of the student body. At a certain point in the discussion, something began bothering him, and on a whim, he asked the bochurim, “What brachah acharonah does one make on an apple?” The unanimous consensus was “al ha’eitz.” The Rosh Yeshivah looked helpless; “Where do I even start?” he wondered.

Learning halachah was once considered integral to the yeshivah curriculum, Rav Lopiansky writes. In Baranovitch, Rav Elchonon Wasserman gave a half-hour daily *shiur* in *Mishnah Berurah*. In today’s yeshivos, where halachah is usually not part of the official curriculum, he advises that the way to go about learning halachah is to consult with someone who is proficient in halachah, prioritize areas to be studied and *simanim* to be learned, and make a reasonable schedule.

As with learning *bekius*, clarity, review, and testing are all critical to mastering halachah.

Rav Lopiansky also dedicates significant attention to the criticality of the study of mussar, delineating a four-step process to bring mussar principles from abstract, theoretical concepts to part of one’s emotional makeup. These steps include “emotional learning, regular, scheduled learning, introspection, and commitment to developing ourselves.”

The pasuk in Tehillim says “sur mei’ra v’aseh tov — turn away from bad and do good,” but Rav Lopiansky’s book is structured in the reverse. Following 21 chapters that outline the process of “doing good,” he begins Section Two with a discussion of the many temptations and opportunities for a yeshivah bochur to “do bad.”

“This sequence is important,” Rav Lopiansky explains, “because you can’t take a bochur away from something he enjoys without first assuring him that there is something even more enjoyable waiting for him.”

“Enjoying learning,” or more specifically, “connecting with the depth and beauty of Yiddishkeit,” is another cornerstone of Rav Lopiansky’s *chinuch* methodology.

“When I was in yeshivah,” says Reb Mordechai Linzer, “we did not learn the ‘yeshivah *masechta*’ in the afternoons. Rav Lopiansky encouraged us to learn the *masechtos* that would ‘bring Yiddishkeit to life.’ He encouraged us to learn *masechtos* in Seder Moed that would enhance our relationship with the Yamim Tovim. He would tell us that on Rosh Hashanah, we should be learning... *Maseches Rosh Hashanah!* He also encouraged us to learn *Maseches Berachos*, which contains so many themes relevant to daily life as a Yid.” (Today, the yeshivah has two tracks for the afternoon seder — one learns in the above manner, the other learns the “yeshivah *masechta*.”)

Once a *talmid* realizes the richness that awaits him in the world of “*aseh tov*,” he will be more receptive to the dire warnings of the dangers that mandate a zealous “*sur mei’ra*.”

Rav Lopiansky explains, based on the Maharal, that a person’s perception of “self” comes in three stages: *guf* (body), *nefesh* (spirit or life-force), and *seichel* (intellect). As each of those layers are developed, there are different challenges to conquer.

The body is the physical entity of the person, which includes all the pleasures that the body senses. The life-force includes all our emotional drives, such as ambition, greed, jealousy, and possessiveness. The intellect includes the craving for understanding, wisdom, and virtue.

Rav Lopiansky then goes on to discuss specific challenges — and their corresponding strategic approaches — for each of those layers of “self.” In his discussion of challenges to the *guf* layer, which is driven by material and physical desire, he deals with smoking, drinking, and other physical drives.

In his discussion of *nefesh*, which he describes as “self-worth” or “esteem,” he provides practical advice for combating jealousy, striving for greatness, and the importance of comporting oneself with dignity.

And this leads to the final and most essential layer of one’s identity — *seichel* — which Rav Lopiansky explains to mean the spiritual spark within oneself, the *chelek Eloka mi’mal* that he discusses at the very

beginning of the sefer. The way to access this spark, Rav Lopiansky writes, is by living with *emes*.

One especially moving illustration of *emes* is the story he shares about Rav Chatzkel Levenstein who, while on his way to deliver a hesped for Rav Isaac Sher, learned that one of his grandchildren had passed away. Rav Chatzkel proceeded to deliver the hesped but was uncharacteristically restrained. When questioned about this, he explained, “Had I wept, people would think I was crying for Rav Isaac when, in actuality, I am partially crying for my grandchild. So I kept myself from crying altogether.”

Another story illustrates “*emes* in Torah.” The Chazon Ish was once approached by a *talmid chacham* who pointed to something that the Chazon Ish had written.

“This Tosafos seems to prove not that way,” he said.

The Chazon Ish thought.

“You are right,” he said.

“But I have a good answer!” the man exclaimed.

The Chazon Ish wasn’t interested. “Please do not try to justify my position,” he said. “I am wrong.”

Rav Lopiansky says that *Ben Yeshivah* is geared to bochurim ages 17 and up. This can seem rather demanding; is a fresh yeshivah bochur really expected to learn Chumash, mussar, *machshavah*, *sifrei emunah*, and halachah on a regular basis, in addition to the three yeshivah sedorim? Is he meant to spend hours on introspection and developing an emotional relationship with Hashem? For a striving bochur who is already challenged by the opportunities and obligations of yeshivah, the sefer can be very intimidating.

“This sefer is a big-picture map,” Rav Lopiansky explains. “It’s meant to give you a picture of the ‘lay of the land,’ all the paths and byways that lead to your final destination. Do you have to follow it word for word? No. There are different paths. Every bochur should know his capabilities and limitations, and use the material in the sefer to chart his own journey. He



Every bochur should know his capabilities and limitations, and use the material in the sefer to chart his own journey”

should use this sefer wisely, implementing that which he can, and not striving to be what he cannot. Most important of all is the advice and direction given by one’s personal rebbeim. There is no ‘remote-controlled’ chinuch.”

The rebbeim in Rav Lopiansky’s yeshivah can all attest to this approach — that balance between respecting each bochur for what he is and where he comes from, while showing him new horizons for his potential future.

“The yeshivah caters to a diverse student body,” says Rabbi Refoel Mendlowitz, the beloved ninth-grade rebbe in Yeshivah Gedola of Greater Washington, “yet, no efforts are made to diminish that diversity.”

This, Rav Mendlowitz explains, is because Rav Lopiansky wants the *talmidim* to thrive based on who they are.

“If a bochur comes from a yeshivish background he’ll encourage him to remain that way. If he’s from a less yeshivish family, Rav Lopiansky won’t pressure him to change his affiliation. The main thing is that they grow as best as they can, based on who they are.”

Rav Lopiansky extends his bochurim a sense of individuality, says Rabbi Mendlowitz, through the simple effort of calling them by their first names. “We have yearly *farhers* in my class, conducted by Rav Lopiansky. Each time he calls on a boy, before asking the question on the Gemara, he asks, ‘What’s your name?’ He wants them to realize that they’re not just another student — they’re an individual and should be treated as such.”

That “each bochur has a name” is essentially the message that emerges from this newest sefer.

While the yeshivah provides today’s yeshivah bochur with many of the

elements he will need to grow — rebbeim, *shiurim*, handpicked peers, and an insulated atmosphere — it is ultimately his own vision, planning, and implementation that will shape his very identity. And it is his job to take the initiative in envisioning what he can become and how he can make that vision reality.

This past Motzaei Yom Kippur, Rav Lopiansky spoke at the yeshivah’s seudah and shared the following thought. “Towards the end of the *pizmon* ‘Mareh Kohein,’ we say *k’roeh zerichas shemesh al ha’aretz, mareh Kohein* — like seeing the sun shine upon the land is the image of the Kohein.” But this seems to conflict with a different description, provided a few lines earlier. “*K’ner hameitzitz mi’bein hachalonus, mareh Kohein*,” says the *pizmon*, “Like a candle peering through a crack in the window, is the image of the Kohein.”

So which one is it? Is the light radiating from the Kohein Gadol like that of the brilliant sun, or like that of the soft, simple candle?

The answer, said Rav Lopiansky, is that it’s both — and each holds its own beauty.

“After the Iron Curtain fell,” he shared, “I was somewhat involved in helping Russians who had emigrated to Eretz Yisrael. One night, we went to Lod to pick up Reb Chaim Briskman, a leader of one of the refusenik groups.”

By the time they arrived in Yerushalayim it was three in the morning. They headed toward the hotel where Rav Briskman would be staying, but he had a different destination in mind.

“There’s something I want to see,” he said.

“I thought for sure it would be the Kosel,” Rav Lopiansky reflected, “but it wasn’t. He said ‘I want to see Yeshivas Mir. I learn Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz’s *shmuessen*; I want to see his yeshivah.’”

This was in Nissan — when the yeshivah was off-session — never mind the fact that the pre-dawn hour would scarcely boast a robust beis medrash.

“I told him, ‘We can take you to the yeshivah, but I wish we could do it during first seder in the middle of the *zeman*. Then you’d really see what the Mir looks like.’ But he wanted to go, and so we took him.”

Together, they went to the Mir, and entered the beis medrash. The large room was quiet, the hundreds of seats empty — except for one. There sat one bochur, leaning over his *shtender*, learning intently.

“It was as striking as seeing the whole yeshivah in session,” Rav Lopiansky commented.

And this, Rav Lopiansky explained, is the beauty of the candle. While a packed beis medrash can offer a blinding light, a candle can radiate something less dominant but undeniably beautiful.

When a 17-year-old Aaron Lopiansky was sent to learn in Eretz Yisrael, by parents who knew too well the pain of departing from a child, a candle was ignited. Today, we all benefit from its glow, but that alone is not enough.

Ignite your own candle, says Rav Aaron Lopiansky. Carve your own light even within the sunshine.

And let that candle be your guiding light as you embark on your journey to self. ●