



The Key Element

29 ELUL 5722

In the picture here, we can see Reb Yaakov Peles, a well-known communal activist from Eretz Yisroel, presenting the Rebbe with the key to the city of Kiryat Gat at the first Erev Rosh Hashana farbrengen. The Mayor of Kiryat Gat, Mr. Gideon Naor, had appointed Reb Yaakov as his personal envoy to bring the key to the Rebbe. This was the first occasion of such a gift being presented to the Rebbe, of which many followed in later years.

While some may have seen the presenting of a city's key as largely symbolic representing the freedom of the recipient to enter and leave the city at will, the Rebbe explained the deeper meaning, revealing a whole new dimension. In the *sicha*¹ that followed, the Rebbe expounded upon the function of a key, and the *hora'ah* we can draw from it. The Rebbe discussed the concept of an *Ir Elokeinu*, one that is truly worthy of its name, is normally surrounded by protective walls to defend it from unwanted influence. However, it must also have a gate that the

key unlocks, to enable the residents who have been especially prepared, to go out and bring others inside to safety as well.

In the week following this occurrence the Rebbe wrote a letter to Mayor Naor, thanking him with a *todah levavis*—heartfelt thanks—for the honor, reiterating the point that had been discussed at the farbrengen.²

RELATED EPISODES

In later years, it became more common for dignitaries, politicians, and others to present the Rebbe with an honorary key to a town, city, or institution. On one occasion, when presented with this gift, the Rebbe commented how in *halacha*, this act (*mesiras hamaft'e'ach*) represents the transfer of ownership of that which the key opens. The Rebbe explained that this means that all the activities there must be in accord with Torah.³ **T**

1. Toras Menachem Hisvaaduyos 5722 Vol. 3 p. 322
2. Igros Kodesh vol. 22 p. 333
3. Living Torah Disc 78, Program 312





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