



‘Did You Hear What I Said?’

Rabbi Berel Wein passed away last Shabbat, at the age of 91. He was a rosh yeshivah, an educator, author and historian, who made aliyah and inspired tens of thousands over the years.

The following is a story that Rabbi Wein told over many times and that can influence



Rabbi Berel
Wein zt”l

us as well:

“I was a young American boy in 1946 when my father woke me up early and said: ‘We’re going to the airport—Rabbi Yitzhak Herzog from the Land of Israel is arriving in Chicago!’ The whole city came out to welcome this famous rabbi.

“Rabbi Herzog even came to our school and told us the following: ‘I have just returned from meeting the Pope in Rome. I handed him a list of thousands of Jewish children who had been placed in Catholic monasteries by their parents during the Holocaust, in order to save them from the Germans. I told the Pope: “I present you this list as the representative of the Jewish people, and I ask you to return these children to us.” But the Pope refused. He explained that anyone who had entered a Catholic institution had already been baptized and must remain a Christian forever.’

“I remember, as a child, how Rabbi Herzog finished quoting the Pope, paused for a moment, and then burst into tears. I had



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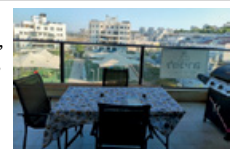
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never seen anyone weep like that. He bent his head over the podium, and it was as if two thousand years of Jewish history poured out of him. The entire audience was stunned.

“Then Rabbi Herzog straightened up, looked at us, and said: ‘I cannot do anything more for those children. But you—what will you do for the Jewish people? What will you do to rebuild our nation?’

“Afterward, when we went to shake his hand, he repeated the same message to each one of us individually. And when he looked at me, still just a boy, he said: ‘Did you hear what I said?’

‘Don’t forget what I said.’

That moment changed my life. It also changed the lives of many who were there. From that group came forth individuals who built great educational institutions and Jewish organizations, and many who made aliyah. Over the years, the young Americans in that hall went on to inspire tens of thousands to be active participants in the Jewish people. All because of one speech, and one sincere cry of anguish.” ■

Sivan Rahav-Meir is a media personality and lecturer. Married to Yedidya, the mother of five. Lives in Jerusalem, and formerly served as the World Mizrahi Shlichah to North America. Sivan lectures in Israel and overseas about the media, Judaism, Zionism and new media. She was voted by Globes newspaper as most popular female media personality in Israel and by the Jerusalem Post as one of the 50 most influential Jews in the world.

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