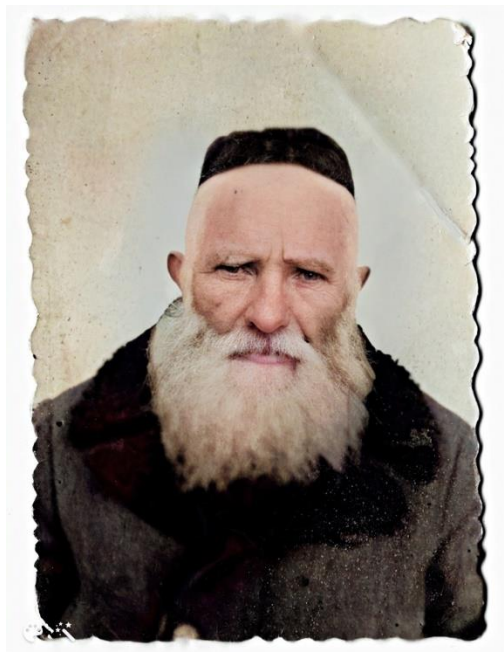


The words of the Levavi (Liubelski) family - at an unveiling event of the mural by the artist: Lina Slipaviciute

As part of the 'Walls that Remember' project in Serhii)Seirijai(, Lithuania, June 18, 2023.

My name is **Shirley Levavi**, the great-granddaughter of the late **Rivka Liubelski**, whose image is commemorated today on a wall situated next to what used to be the old trade school in Serhii in which our family members who were part of the extensive Jewish community in Serhii stayed in their last days.

Rivka, her daughter **Badana**, her son **Avraham**, her son-in-law **Avraham Petlyuk**, her daughter-in-law and her two grandchildren were executed only for being Jews in September 1941, in a field not far from here, in a mass grave. An entire family, an entire life, a human existence brutally wiped out.



Lubelski yehuda photo 1924-5



Lubelski rivka photo 1927-8

In these words, I represent the sons and daughters of my family living in Israel, the descendants of **Meir Levavi (Liubelski)**, the second son of **Yehuda** and **Rivka Liubelski's** five children, some of whom are here with me and among them my sister **Idit Levavi Gabbai**, who gave you the information and was in contact with you.

Meir, my grandfather, was born in Serhii in 1901, attended “Heider” as a child and excelled in his studies. Already at a young age he showed an artistic talent in painting and may have even studied at the school for arts and crafts nearby this building. His father **Yehuda**, in the spirit of the Enlightenment Movement and the concern for his son's profession, intended him to study medicine.



The Jewish Beit Midrash in Serhii that was later burned down



Meir Levavi (Liubelski) with his eldest sister Hana

Serhii 1916-17

While studying medicine in Vilnius, where anti-Semitism was already felt on the streets, **Meir** met representatives of the Zionist movement who urged him and his friends from the Jewish youth to hurry up and immigrate to the Land of Israel and join the many young pioneers who dreamt and aspired to establish a national home for the Jewish people. Thus, against the wishes of his parents, who in these years still could not have imagined the disaster that was about to befall them and their loved ones. he leaves his medical studies and decides in 1920, at the age of 19, to change his destiny and move towards the unknown, to the Land of Israel.

During these years, he sends letters to his family and convinces his little sister, **Masha Liubelski**, to follow him and come to Israel as well, even though this plan is not well received by their family and adds much concern to their mother **Rivka**.

Three of the five brothers
of the Liubelski family:
Badana, Avraham
and Masha (kneeling)

Serheii 1930



The Sisters Badana and Masha Liubelski

Serhii 1930

Meir, and after him also his sister **Masha**, joins the avant-garde ideological groups that establish in Israel the 'Kibbutzim' - cooperative agricultural communes that served as a lever for growth and development in the young country that was being built then. **Meir** and his wife **Sonia**, who also came as a young girl from Galicia to Israel for ideological reasons, made their home in kibbutz Merhavia. **Masha** and her husband **Helmut Lasker** made their home in Kibbutz Nir-David.



Masha Liubelski and Helmut Lasker at the entrance
of the family tent in Kibbutz Nir- David - 1938



Meir and Sonia Levavi youngpioneers- 1921 >

Knowing what happened about twenty years later, **Meir's** decision to immigrate to the Land of Israel turned out to be an act that saved both his life and the life of his sister Masha, thus enabling the continuity of the family tree, that many of its branches were perished in the Holocaust of the Jews in Lithuania. Thanks to this decision of his, and in his name, I stand before you today and speak to you to raise the memory of his family and the memory of his mother **Rivka**, for whom he did not get to say the "Kaddish" prayer (a Jewish prayer said for the ascension of the soul of the deceased).

Unfortunately, we do not know much about the lives and occupations of **Rivka** and **Yehuda**, their daughter **Badana**, and their younger son **Avraham**, who stayed and raised families in Serhii. We only have a few photos, a small bundle of letters and a single and emotional evidence document - an invitation to the wedding of **Badana Liubelski** with her chosen one **Avraham Petliuk** from 1930. They were all viciously slaughtered and have no tombstone or grave that we can visit in their memory.



A document from the family archive - an invitation to the wedding of Badana and Abraham Petliuk - which took place in Kovna on 10.4.1930



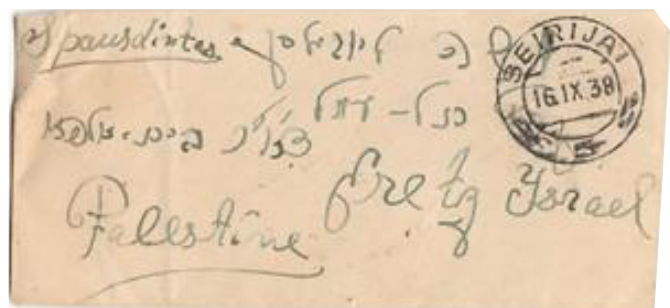
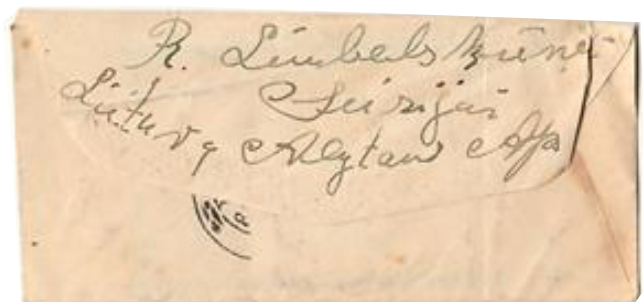
The wedding photo of Badana Liubelski and Abraham Petliuk - from right to left: The groom Avraham, the bride Badana, the bride's mother Rivka Liubelski, and the brothers Masha and Avraham

From these words you can understand how emotional we are about your initiative and the project **'Walls that Remember'**. We are excited to see the image of our great-grandmother, the late **Rivka Liubelski**, whom we did not get to know, and all that remains in our hands is this picture that is now painted on the wall and directs her look to the place where she met her death with her children and small grandchildren in a cruel manner, a death that the human mind cannot bear and endure. While this project does not obscure our pain it does some historical justice with the memory of our loved ones and the Serhii Jewish community.

The French philosopher and semiotician **Roland Barthes** attributed to a photograph the status of a **relic** - a sacred object. Looking at his mother's picture on the photographic paper, **Barthes** said that what creates the image in the photograph is the light that was returned and projected from his mother's living body onto the photographic film, these are actually the traces of her aura, the light that radiated from her body and left its mark on the photographic paper, just like the story of the handkerchief of St. Veronica.



Rivka Lubelski Serhii 1927-8



Details on the envelope from the last letter that Rivka sent to her daughter Masha in the Land of Israel on 16.9.1938

This is the time to thank **Lina Shlipavichute** for her mural that preserves for our family and for future generations the aura of our great-grandmother - the late **Rivka Liubelski**. This mural transmits her presence to us and to you as a present testimony representing the Jewish community in Serhii that has become extinct. We also wish to thank **Ieva Vaivaraitė-**

Ošikienė for all her help and good will communicating with us regarding this project and inviting us to participate in this emotional ceremony.

We'll remember and not forget. May the memory of our family members, the memory of saints in their lives and in their deaths be blessed.



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The writers of the sotry on behalf of the Levavi family are **Idit Levavi Gabbai**² and **Shirley Levavi**¹ - the great-granddaughters of the late Rivka Liuvalski the granddaughters of the late Meir Levavi (Liuvalski) her son.

May 2023, Israel