‘How will I explain to your mother?’ wails father of terror victim sisters at funeral

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By Jeremy Sharon

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In an outpouring of anguish and sorrow, thousands of mourners gathered on Sunday afternoon to pay their last respects to sisters Maia Dee, 20, and Rina Dee, 15, who were murdered by Palestinian gunmen on Friday in the northern West Bank.

Those at the cemetery in the Kfar Etzion settlement wept bitterly, as the bodies of the two sisters were brought into the funeral hall, with their father, Rabbi Leo Dee, reaching out to his three other children for comfort.

His wife Lucy, 48, who was severely injured in the terror attack in the Jordan Valley, remained in critical condition in the hospital following surgery.

Also in attendance were friends and family of the sisters, including their fellow students from the religious seminary and high school they attended. The mourners sang psalms and songs of lamentation, loss, and hope, as they awaited the arrival of the funeral procession to the cemetery.

Several government officials were also present at the funeral, including Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir, as well as former president Reuven Rivlin.

Opening his eulogy for his two young daughters, Dee paid tribute to his wife as “my CEO,” prayed for her recovery and thanked friends, neighbors and well-wishers for their help in the days following the attack.

“How will I explain to Lucy what has happened to her two precious gifts, when she wakes up from her coma?” he asked.

Speaking of his daughters while frequently choking with emotion, he recalled their dedication to their studies, their commitment to the country, and the hopes and dreams they had for the future.

“The formula for faith is always to focus on what you do have and not what you do not have. I still have three wonderful children and a wonderful wife,” he declared.

“My beautiful perfect Maia, we named you ‘God’s water’ and you were so many people’s friend, flowing between so many different groups. You were always an angel, now you will always be our guardian angel.”

Addressing Rina, he described her as a dedicated student and friend, and a responsible person who others relied upon and trusted.

“You would tidy the youth club for hours by yourself. People loved you and knew they could depend on you,” he said and noted she had been considering enlisting in the IDF after high school and religious studies.

“You dreamed of traveling the world, now you’re traveling to heaven,” said Rabbi Dee, who was traveling with other members of the family in a car ahead of his wife, Maia and Rina, on a trip to Tiberias.

“Maia and Rina, you are two flames who have not gone out. You will bring more light to the world. You have inspired and loved us; in return, we will love you forever.”

Dee also addressed the current societal rift in the country over the government’s judicial overhaul plan, saying the flood of condolences and messages of support he had received, and the large crowd at the funeral, proved the country was nevertheless very much united.

“When a simple family in Efrat is devastated and the whole country hurts, there is no greater proof of our unity than this,” he said, going on to say that the real threat to the country came from terrorists “who are prepared to destroy your lives in an instant.”

He continued: “Maia and Rina — you are now part of us all forever. If [we] looked at what we have and not at what we don’t have, we would realize we are united with the forces of good, against the forces of evil, and we will always prevail.”

Keren Dee, 17, struggled to deliver her eulogy, overcome with grief at the death of her sisters, and saying she could not fathom the loss.

Her words stirred the assembled mourners who wept almost continually throughout her eulogy.

“Maia, you were my whole world, you were my best friend, my big sister… we went through everything together,” cried Keren. “Maia, my big sister, I will take up the role of the big sister at home. I hope I will do it as well as you, but I am certain I will not succeed in replacing you. I promise to take care of Tali and Yehudah like you took care of us,” she continued, referring to the two other surviving siblings.

“I love you and miss you like crazy,” she continued, as the crowd wept with her.

“My Rina, my little sister, I promised you I would take care of you and I’m sorry I did not fulfill my promise. I would do everything to have been in the car instead of you. I am scared to think what you did in those moments of pain. How did you cope with all that fear, and I wasn’t there to save you. The world is losing a pure soul.”

Speaking before the funeral ceremony began, Udi Abramovitch, the head of Midreshet Lindenbaum – Lod, the religious seminary where Maia studied, said she had been a dedicated student who loved books and her religious studies.

“Maia loved the land of Israel. She loved excursions around the country, and would say how beautiful every place was,” said Abramovitch.

Some of the congregants from the synagogue in Radlett, UK, where Dee served as a communal rabbi for four years before the family moved to Israel in 2014, described the family as “very hospitable,” adding that they always had their house open for guests.

“We’re devastated. They are a lovely family,” said one congregant who declined to give her name. “They always talked about making aliyah, we always knew they would come back to Israel but they wanted to bring a bit of Israel and Judaism to Radlett first.”

During the funeral, the car apparently used by the Palestinian terrorists who killed Maia and Rina was found by Palestinian Authority security forces in Nablus, according to reports circulating on social media.

Locals in Nablus claimed the car, which has Israeli license plates, was found in the northern West Bank city two days after the deadly shooting attack. The unverified reports said the car was taken by PA officials for inspection.

Images show the plates match the car seen in surveillance camera footage shortly after the attack.

The terrorists who carried out the attack were still at large.