

A Meditation on the Tragedies of Recent Days

from RA President Gerry Skolnik

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

The month of Av has come upon us in a manner true to historical form. *Misbenehnas Av, m'ma'atin b'simhab...* When the month of Av begins, we are told, we are instructed to diminish our joy. Sadly, a week of violence and tragedy all over the world has done it for us.

With our heads still bowed low in sorrow over the murder of innocent Israeli tourists in Bulgaria earlier this week, we learned of yet another episode of horrific violence, this time in Aurora, Colorado. For reasons still unknown – are there ever reasons for something like this? – a gunman walked into a crowded movie theater, sprayed tear gas and opened fire on the stunned patrons. At least 12 are reported dead, some 50 wounded, and countless others traumatized.

It is not Aurora alone that has suffered this attack. We are all citizens of Aurora. We are all stunned and dismayed by the senseless violence, and the raging hatred that generated it. And, once again, we are reminded of the fragility of the fundamental social contract that binds us to each other in a civil society. Each and every assault on that unwritten contract erodes our sense of security, and in so doing, threatens to make us that much less trusting, and less compassionate.

Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims of this most recent episode and with their families. There are no words that can adequately convey the depth of our dismay and sadness at this senseless tragedy. We pray for strength and comfort for those who so desperately need it, and resilience of spirit to all of us who grieve along with them.

May the month of Av yet live up to its fuller, more hopeful name of *Menabeim Av*; may it bring comfort where there is now pain, and joy where there is sorrow ...

Note: The RA recently posted a prayer by Menachem Creditor in response to the terror attack in Bulgaria, which is available in [English](#) and [Hebrew](#).