

A time for silence and lament

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The tragic shooting in Arizona has become a cultural Rorschach test. People see what they want to see about what's wrong with our culture, who the bad guys are and what should be done about it.

It's said the shooting was the result of [overheated political rhetoric](#), a lack of [gun controls](#) or too much [violence in movies](#) and television. Many [believe](#) the shooter was motivated by the political right, others [say](#) it was the left. As if to trump all other explanations, Scot McKnight [says](#) the problem is the evil that lurks in all of our hearts.

We may never know what motivated Jared Lee Loughner to go on a killing rampage. One thing is clear: he was mentally unbalanced, and [he didn't get the help he needed](#). He fell through the system, if it's even accurate to say there is a system through which one can fall.

We humans are meaning-making animals. We like to make sense of tragic and evil events. But does it make sense that a crazed gunman shot one of the brightest, most independent-minded voices in Congress? Does it make sense that the same gunman killed a bright-eyed, nine-year-old girl, born on 9/11, who was interested in government and wanted to meet the congresswoman? Some things just are senseless, and we should be cautious about adorning them with explanations and meaning.

One of the most remarkable scenes in the Bible is when Job's friends first come to see him after he experiences devastating loss and illness. His friends "sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was great." Job's friends were doing fine until they opened their mouths and tried to explain the reasons for his plight.

It's true that we need to learn whatever we can from this episode, if for no other reason than to try to prevent such things in the future. And the impulse to find acts of courage and redemption in the face of unspeakable evil is a necessary and noble one.

Now, though, might be a time for silence, a time for just living with the tragedy without needing to explain it. Now is the time especially to mourn those who were killed and to support the survivors and all the family and friends whose lives were unalterably rocked by this senseless event.

If we say anything at all, perhaps it needs to take the form of lament.