

## **An Open Letter to the Jewish Community**

*06-10-10*

We write in defense of our colleague, Rabbi Eric Gurvis. Rabbi Gurvis leads Temple Shalom of Newton, is the past president of the Massachusetts Board of Rabbis (MBR), Boston Area Reform Rabbis (BARR), and currently serves as the president of the Newton Clergy Association. He is a distinguished teacher and respected community leader.

We were shocked and appalled by the vicious, personal attack written by Mr. Charles Jacobs and printed in the Jewish Advocate. We denounce this attack, and call upon Mr. Jacobs to discontinue his destructive campaign against Boston's Muslim community, which is based on innuendo, half-truths, and unproven conspiracy theories. We call upon members of our community to reject the dangerous politics of division that Mr. Jacobs fosters.

Rabbi Gurvis stood with a number of us at a recent interfaith press conference, denouncing the inappropriate words of a gubernatorial candidate who implied that addressing a large group of Muslims was "pandering to terrorists." Just as we rabbis would expect Christians and Muslims to stand with us Jews if we were unjustly held accountable for the actions of a handful of our people, Rabbi Gurvis stood with our Muslim neighbors. In fact, he pointed out that when Temple Shalom was defaced by a swastika, one of the first calls he received was from Bilal Kaleem from the Muslim American Society.

During these difficult times, Rabbi Gurvis, along with other courageous religious leaders are attempting to foster a different kind of politics. We support his commitment to interfaith dialogue and cooperation. We stand together in our commitment to a community in which neighbors seek to know one another and join together for the common good.

We write these words following the week in which the Torah portion was Shelach Lecha. It tells the stories of the Israelite scouts who were overcome by fear. As a result, they "spread calumnies" among the entire Israelite camp who in turn broke out into loud cries and weeping. Because they succumbed to their fears, God condemned this generation to die in the wilderness. We refuse to allow Mr. Jacobs to spread his calumnies and paralyze our community in fear.

We the undersigned rabbis support Rabbi Eric Gurvis and walk together in faith.

(institutional affiliation for identification purposes only)

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