

With all the talk about the Mavi Marmara, the Flotilla ship that was intercepted by the Israelis last week, I needed an antidote, something that would give us a broader picture than is usually reported in the press. I found this article on the website of the Independent Media Review and Analysis (<http://www.imra.org.il/>). This web site was founded in 1992 by Drs. Aaron and Joseph Lerner. It was their intention to provide what they call 'an ongoing analysis of developments in Arab-Israeli relations.'

This article tells the story of a 15 year old Palestinian boy who was working on June 3rd in his family's fields in Jenin, a city in the West Bank. This village is very near Israel's Jezreel Valley and the Israeli city of Afula.

While trying to kill a deadly viper snake, the teen was bitten on his right palm. His screams brought his father who rushed his son to the Jenin Hospital. But they had no anti-serum for the bite. So the father took his son to the Emek Medical Center in Afula.

Later the father told doctors that he had been afraid to take his son to an Israeli Hospital because he was sure that they would be ignored, in fact he expected that the Israelis would not even speak to them.

The reality was that they were greeted immediately in Arabic, rushed into the Emergency Room where the hospital's multi-ethnic staff saved the boy's life. He stayed in the pediatric intensive care unit for two days and then was moved into the pediatric surgical department from which he was released a few days later.

The doctor asked the father what he thought about the care his son received and about the doctors and hospital in Israel.

The father replied, 'Our people do not know the truth about you and our medicine has a long way to go. My son and I are not the same as we were before this happened and I will share this with my family and friends.'

Emek Medical Center has been in Afula since 1924, long before the State of Israel was founded. Long before the seemingly intransigent hatred existed between Israelis and Arabs. Its patients are 50% Israeli and 50% Arab.

It seems to me beyond a tragedy that it took almost losing his son for this Palestinian man to see the reality of Israeli compassion and care. It seems to me beyond a tragedy that this situation may have to be healed one person, one family at a time. But maybe that is the only way it will change.

After treating the Palestinian teen and hearing his father's gratitude, the Israeli doctor turns to a colleague, a Muslim doctor at the hospital and asks him what he thinks about the father's response. His answer, 'It's a good thing there are snakes.'

Let's hope it doesn't take too many more snakes before we can see each other as the human beings we truly are.

Shabbat Shalom.