March 1972

HOW ARE YOUR DISTANCES?

On Purim Day the family and I went on a tour to Ein Gedi via Jerusalem, Jericho, Quamean and the northwestern shore of the Dead Sea. Ein Gedi is located on the shores of the Dead Sea or at least its lands are. The shore of the Dead Sea in that area still smells of sulphur and the Biblical account of the destruction of Sodom and Gommorah by fire and brimstone (sulphur) is still very vivid. The settlement of Ein Gedi is set back a little on an overlooking hill and draws its water from the famous beautiful Nahal David with its refreshing pool and waterfa David fled to Ein Gedi when Saul turned ugly and tried to kill him, and thus the pool and gorg are named after him. Standing there I was suddenly struck by the really short distance which separates the heights of Jerusalem from the depths of the Dead Sea. Jerusalem the symbol of t heavenly, the pure, the refined is really only a short distance from the barren, sulphurous Dead Sea, the lowest place on earth. In fact, from some places in Jerusalem you can see the Dead Sea. The climb up from the Dead Sea to Jerusalem is very rough. The Midbar ~~Yehoseph~~ Yehudah with its rugged terrain looks just like the Wild West with its steep canyons and gorges. A Wadi isn't just a dry river bed it's s deep canyon with steep walls. The climb up from a lower level existance to a higher level one is a hard task. To go up to Jerusalem is arduos busines But the descent can be managed much easier. And the distance really isn't very great. This unfortunately is a lesson which our generation seems to have forgotten. It takes a lot of wor and effort to try to live the good and morsl life and it requires constant vigilance. Just gi up for a little while and take the easier paths and soon you'll find you have traversed the really short distance to the depths of human behavior. Of course, there is a saving feature. Even in the depths of the world there is an Ein Gedi. And if a person wants he can even there find the proper nourishment and make his way back up to the heights. Let no one make the mistake of thinking that because he's in the depth he is doomed to stay there forever. Pesach too I believe, has something of this same message. By our efforts to expunge the Chometz from our homes (which in this context has the conotation of human weakness and failings) we testify to the fact that we can overcome our moral deficiencies and that we can make it back up to the heights where we belong. We also say that if we don't periodically look at our failings we can too fall very quickly to the depths. We all periodically have to check our

distances. May you all have a Happy and Meaningful Pesach and may all your Distances be close to Jerusalem.