

A SOLDIER'S THOUGHTS OF PASSOVER

The Jewish Chronicle

May 7, 1915

A correspondent sends us a letter he received from the Front from a Jewish soldier, in the course of which he writes: -

So to-day is "Erev Pesach". Somehow to me it seems impossible as I am here on an empty ammunition box, the boys all around me busy in preparation for our journey back to the trenches to-night.... Way back in old England I can just picture many another scene of preparation. Strange, indeed, for just as the folks at home will be leaving for school and the celebration of Passover's first two days, I shall be leaving for the trenches also for two days. Now I am waiting for the mail expected this afternoon, for it should contain my Passover parcel, and somehow I must manage some sort of celebration. Last mail brought me the first *Jewish Chronicle* I've seen since we landed, and very welcome it was. Specially interesting is the account of the Rev. Michael Adler's tour in France, but he has not been anywhere in our neighbourhood. I'm taking it up to the trenches, not having had time to read it through. Midnight, Monday. No mail arrived, more to my disappointment. Now I shall get no mail until Thursday morning. At 5:30 p.m. we left our quarters for the trenches, a few miles away, and trudged along the scarred roads, with a glorious full moon and starlit sky overhead. Our thoughts were far away from Flanders. I could clearly see the smartly dressed crowd making for school, the lights and chanting of the service seemed quite close, and then – boom! As a big gun spoke, the star shells shoot up and the rattle of rifle fire grows clearer as we get nearer the firing line, so I came back to earth again. Never until to-night have I felt really homesick, but then as I thought of the scene at home, the lights and the musical clink of glasses and tableware, then I felt as though I would do anything to be sitting in the seat that I know will be left for me, and to drive away the sorrow of the dear folks that I know my absence will cause them. But that 'fit of the blues' must be shaken off. About 10 o'clock we reached our destination, fortunately without a single casualty, though we had been under fire part of the way up, and my platoon has been in the dug-outs as reserve to the firing line, and about 100 yards to the rear of it. This pleased me greatly; it seems more fitting on the night of nights to be here at rest than to be up there firing perhaps at someone who is thinking much as I am – who knows? As soon as we got settled in this dug-out I managed to get a fire going, and made some cocoa, this, with a biscuit, making my "Seder Night," and I said the Blessing for Wine over it, and drank a toast to those at home in response to the toast they will certainly drink to me to-night. So I finished my little Seder and then read some of the Psalms from my soldier's prayer-book. We are eleven in this dug-out, and afterwards I talked to the boys of the Passover, seeing in it all wonders I've never seen before, and the deeper significance of it came home to me. They are fine boys, these, gentlemen all, who would share their last crumb with me if I wanted it, and they just sat in silence listening carefully to all I said, and when I had finished dear old Dick said: "It's alright old man, we understand." Just that and no more. Now they are all asleep, and I write this by candle light to the accompaniment of the "crack, crack" as the bullets hit the bank overhead... Good night and good Yomtov all, my dear ones, my thoughts are with you all.