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Communications

ERICH FROMM

TO THE EDITOR:

I read with interest Rabbi I. Nathan Bamberger's "Note on Erich Fromm's Rabbinic Roots." (*Tradition*, 29:3, Spring 1995). Rabbi Bamberger's statement that "Throughout his life, Fromm had abandoned Judaism and lost interest in his family roots" is not quite accurate. In an article on "The Frankfort Lehrhaus," the late Nahum Glatzer describes the course offerings for the fourth academic year (1922-23). These included "the lectures on Karaism by Dr. Erich Fromm, then a sociologist and student of Jewish lore" and "an advanced course in Rashi to the Book of Exodus, given by Erich Fromm, in which five students participated" (Year Book I, Leo Baeck Institute, 1956, p. 114).

Frankfort must have been an intellectually vibrant city in the 1920's. Fromm is the only individual I know of who was associated both with the Institute for Social Research (Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Walter Benjamin, *et al*) and the Jewish Lehrhaus (Franz Rosenzweig, Martin Buber, *et al*). His primary interests clearly lay in the social sciences, but Erich Fromm had not completely lost touch with his roots in those years.

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TO THE EDITOR:

Rabbi I. Nathan Bamberger's short "Note on Erich Fromm's Rabbinic Roots" (*Tradition*, 29:3, Spring 1995) does contain some interesting new information, but I would like to point out that it is not free of mistakes. The famous psychoanalyst was married not twice but three times; details can be found in Rainer Funk's excellent book on Erich Fromm published by Rowohlt Taschenbuchverlag (Reinbek, 1983). Obviously, Rabbi Bamberger has read the obituary in the *New York Times*, but not Steven S. Schwarzschild's very instructive article, "Remembering Erich Fromm" (*The Jewish Spectator*, Fall 1980), which set the record straight. To claim that Fromm had abandoned Judaism and lost interest in his family roots is simply wrong, as Professor Schwarzschild demonstrated beyond any doubt.

Rabbi Bamberger lists some of Fromm's publications. I wonder why he omits the two books about Judaism which the psychologist wrote. "You Shall Be as Gods" is a well-known study; it was reviewed in *Tradition* (10:2, Winter 1968) by Irving Block. Fromm's doctoral dissertation, "Das juedische Gesetz" ("Jewish Law") was written in 1922 but published for



Communications

the first time after the author's death (Beltz Verlag: Weinheim, 1989). It is worth noting that in this thesis Fromm mentions his great-grandfather, the Wurzburger Rav. He explains Rabbi Seligmann Baer Bamberger's position concerning the question of secession from the united Jewish community (p. 154). However, as I showed in my review of "Das juedische Gesetz" (*Illustrierte Neue Welt*, April 1990, p. 8), Fromm misrepresented the Wurzburger Rav's point of view. In 1967, Fromm wrote in a letter to Prof. Schwarzschild: "I was always a strong partisan of the Bamberger standpoint."

I am convinced that the psychoanalyst never really understood what the argument between Rabbi S.R. Hirsch and Rabbi S.B. Bamberger was about. To be fair, I would like to add that Fromm is not the only one who misunderstood the controversy about which so much has already been written.

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MRS. COOPERMAN

TO THE EDITOR:

In his "Editor's Notebook" (*Tradition*, 29.2, Winter 1995), Rabbi Emanuel Feldman praised Mrs. Cooperman, a woman who would recite the entire prayer book every Shabbat morning. Even after gentle reminding from the *rebbe'sin*, she would continue in this "tradition." He used the following words to describe her:

Now we realize that while she may have been ignorant of the subtleties and nuances of Torah learning, she possessed something that we utterly lacked then, and probably still lack now: devotion, surrender, and child-like innocence before the presence of God.

The perfect synagogue for Mrs. Cooperman is described on the pages of *Tradition* itself. She would make an exceptional congregant in the synagogue described by Haym Soloveitchik in his article, "Rupture and Reconstruction: The Transformation of Contemporary Orthodoxy" (28:4 Summer, 1994, p. 99). He describes the attendants as non-observant Eastern European Jews, many of whom did not keep Shabbat or eat kosher, and yet at *Ne'ila*, a hush came over the crowd.

Their tears were courtroom tears, with whatever degree of sincerity such tears have. What was absent among the thronged students in Bnei Brak and in other contemporary services—and, lest I be thought to be exempting myself from this assessment, absent in my own religious life, too—was that primal fear of Divine Judgment, simple and direct.

97