

Brichto

## The Names of God

Poetic Readings in Biblical Beginnings

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In *The Names of God*, as in his previous study, *Toward a Grammar of Biblical Poetics* (OUP, 1992), Herbert Brichto continues to argue against the atomistic readings of the Hebrew Bible by the currently dominant schools of Biblical scholarship. He maintains, that despite the repetitions and self contradictions found in the Five Books of Moses, the Pentateuch possesses an aesthetic and ideological wholeness. Its harmonious blend of stories and structures inform one another as they give shape and meaning to the relationship and expectations between a benevolent God and recalcitrant humankind. In particular, Bichto focuses his "poetic" reading on the Book of Genesis. He uses the methods of contemporary literary criticism to examine one of the greatest inconsistencies within Genesis, the alternating use of Yahweh (the Lord) and Elohim (God) as names for the Deity. Often cited as the proof of multiple authorship, Brichto shows, instead, that this "inconsistency" serves as a device for a single author, using the specific name that is appropriate to each specific story. Brichto then proceeds to overturn other multiple-author proofs, including variations in genealogies, eponyms, and chronologies. He shows that their variety, ingenuity, and imaginative whimsy serve a vital poetic function in the structure of the text as a whole. Finding a unity in this diversity of genres, styles, and devices, Brichto overturns many of the assumptions of current scholarship as he solidifies his thesis of single authorship.

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Neumannstraße 10, 40235 Düsseldorf | [kundenservice@fachmedien.de](mailto:kundenservice@fachmedien.de) | 0800 000-1637 (Inland)

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