This interesting research concerns the narratives of the patriarchs of Israel in Philo of Alexandria. The theme, the aim of the study, and its method are introduced in the first section of the book (1–12) where it is also conveniently remarked that the traditions on Abram, Isaac, Jacob, and their relatives, investigated beginning with Gen 11:27–36 (see p. 21), have had a varied fortune in other Jewish and Christian biblical or deuterocanonical books (see 8–9).

The second section of the book is divided into five chapters and contains a review of actual research on Philo and some methodological questions (13–37). The secondary literature about narratives on the patriarchs in Philo practically does not exist. The section also includes a presentation of Philonic texts and methodological questions about his works and their public, as well as a list of questions that guide the present research. What kind of selection does Philo make in presenting these narratives? What particular form of a narrative does he choose and why? What are his references in interpreting these narratives? What are his aims in using such narratives or characters? What is their importance in the construction of Philo’s convictions? What should Philonic readers infer for themselves about these narratives? These questions (35–36) are the basis of the textual analysis that forms the central part of book.
The third section is the core of the volume, with its 370 pages (38–408). It represents the central part of the research, based on in-depth analysis of Philonic sources. It is divided into six chapters, most of which have many subdivisions. The first one (38–116) begins with a biographical survey on Philo and his background and continues with a very interesting synthesis of his approach to the biblical text. Here Böhm describes Philonic beliefs about the origin and inner value of the Mosaic law, about the distinction between the Hebrew original text and the Septuagint, and about Philo’s allegorical hermeneutics in the Alexandrine context. Other topics examined are the self-understanding of Philo as an exegete (he considered himself simply a follower of Moses, among others) and the practical consequences of exegetical work for personal upbringing. The chapter closes with a section about Philo’s public, a truly debated question. At least for the works analyzed in this book, it is not easy to find crucial arguments to answer this question, and the opinion of the scholars are often based on generic references to literary genders rather than to real arguments (as seems to be the case also for most of the hypotheses Böhm summarizes here [111–14]). While dealing mainly with secondary literature, this whole chapter also discusses and quotes a significant selection of Philonic texts and thus offers much more than a mere introductory discussion.

The three subsequent chapters, which constitute the central part of this long section, are dedicated to the textual analysis of the main works of Philo dealing with the patriarchal narratives: *Exposition of the Law* (116–238), *Allegorical Commentary* (238–326), and *Questions and Answers on Genesis* (327–400). Each chapter begins with an introduction to the work or treatise examined and continues by questioning the text according to the criteria specified above (its aims, readers, etc.). Such close examination leads to interesting conclusions, significant even for a general understanding of these texts. Relating the patriarchal narratives, the *Exposition* intends to propose Judaism as a harmonious whole of universal values, suitable to the entirety of contemporary humanity. The *Commentary* does not show the same purpose: even if Philo applies here the same kind of actualizing exegesis, his representation of patriarchs is here a more typological illustration of human virtues and flaws. The *Questions* shows a more text-centered exegesis, being interested in the historical sense of the text more than in its implications for actual readers. The textual analysis is obviously much more complex and argued, but Philo shows in conclusion a different understanding and a different habit toward these narratives, according to the different scopes of his works.

The last two chapters of this big section contain further remarks on the Philonic texts just analyzed (400–403) and on the understanding of his work, which was ignored by Jewish authors and appreciated by Christians (403–8). In conclusion, this large third section contains very stimulating pages and can really be commended for its effort in textual analysis, where Böhm shows Philo’s ideas and aims by discussing and quoting his
own words. This analytical procedure is applied even in the relatively marginal first chapter, about the Philonic approach to Mosaic texts, and it is definitely the main methodological element of the book.

The fourth section of the book presents the conclusions of the analysis, summarized in eleven theses (409–19), while the last section is an excursus about the patriarchal narratives in the New Testament, which belongs to an exegetical context close to Philo’s, as can be inferred comparing Philo’s work to Paul’s letters (420–35). In the theses proposed in the fourth section, Böhm suggests first of all to differentiate Philo’s understanding and the function of the patriarchal narratives according to his different works (Exposition, Commentary, and Questions) and according to the two levels of interpretation, literal and allegorical. This is naturally consistent with the exegesis as it was practiced in that period. In the Exposition, Philo presents the patriarchal narratives to a reader with no previous knowledge of the Bible (ideally a non-Jew). The Commentary and the Questions have a different perspective, and, largely using the Septuagint as a recognized reference (explicitly or not), they clearly assume a Jewish reader. The final theses present the different understandings of these narratives as a kind of organic expression that in some way reassembles the Egyptian, Jewish, and Hellenistic roots of the Alexandrine culture that belongs to Philo and that will soon belong to the Christian culture.

Whether these last theses are accepted or not, the whole book has many remarks of such kind, pointing to the proximity between Philo and the New Testament background: they surface quite often all along the book, and, although true, sometimes they are not fully demonstrate and would deserve a separate analysis. The book is in any case outstanding and is completed by a comprehensive bibliography and a striking series of indexes that cover some forty-seven pages, including modern and ancient authors as well as proper, Greek, and Hebrew names. In conclusion, this volume represents a true commentary for a considerable part of Philo’s work, sometimes the only one in existence. It has a clever methodological viewpoint, offers new perspectives for a general understanding of a large part of Philo’s work, and establishes, in my view, many unquestionable conclusions.