Hamori's work is part of a welcome trend in scholarship that addresses divine corporeality in the Hebrew Bible (see also, e.g., Benjamin Sommer, *The Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009]; Andreas Wagner, *Gottes Körper: Zur alttestamentlichen Vorstellung der Menschengestaltigkeit Gottes* [Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2010]). In particular, her study examines Gen 18:1–15 and 32:23–33, which portray God in the form of a “man” in the context of terrestrial divine-human interaction, and their relation to their closest biblical and ancient Near Eastern analogues.

In the first chapter, Hamori introduces the concept of “human theophany” (1) with these two passages from Genesis that refer to God as a “man” (‘iš or ‘anāšîm), who “appears in the literal, physical body of a man” (3). She then offers a sketch of Gen 18:1–15 and 32:23–33 in which she argues for the compositional integrity of both passages and that the ‘iš language should be taken as literally as theophany language elsewhere. In her analysis of Gen 18, she notes that YHWH appears with such “anthropomorphic realism” that Abraham perceives the divine nature of his visitor through verbal rather than visual clues. In Gen 32, the divine nature of Jacob’s combatant (here El instead of YHWH), is likewise revealed through the dialogue. In fact, she argues, God is so tied to realistic
human form that he cannot win the fight. In the course of her analysis, she convincingly refutes the notion that Jacob wrestled with the numen of the River Jabbok, as argued in particular by Gunkel (13–18).

Chapter 2 begins by noting the imprecision with which scholars in general and biblical scholars in particular discuss anthropomorphism. She then proceeds to offer her own helpful taxonomy of the physical anthropomorphisms of the divine in the Hebrew Bible. Her first category, “concrete anthropomorphism,” to which Gen 18 and 32 belong, refers to concrete, physical divine embodiment. “Envisioned anthropomorphism” refers to the “sight of the deity in a dream or vision” and includes such texts as Gen 28:13 and Amos 9:1 (29). Texts in the “immanent anthropomorphism” category (e.g., Exod 33:9 and 34:5–6) describe God in anthropomorphic terms and suggest divine immanence, yet do not explicitly depict God as physically embodied. To the “transcendent anthropomorphism” category (to be distinguished from Hendel’s use of the same descriptor in a different way [“Aniconism and Anthropomorphism in Ancient Israel,” in The Image and the Book (ed. van der Toorn; Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 207–8]) belong texts that describe the deity in anthropomorphic terms without being concretely embodied, explicitly envisioned, or immanent (e.g., Gen 1, 2; Ps 82:1). The final category, “figurative anthropomorphism,” refers to texts that figuratively describe divine body parts, such as YHWH’s strong hand or eye (e.g., Isa 41:10; 42:6). As is to be expected, “many texts reflect a mixed approach to divine anthropomorphism” (33).

Chapter 3 examines philosophical approaches to anthropomorphism. In it Hamori surveys the development of the negative evaluation of divine anthropomorphism that led to classical theism’s contention that God does not and cannot have a body. In light of this prevalent perspective, scholars often understand divine anthropomorphisms to be either metaphorical or primitive. However, despite these reservations, all theism remains anthropomorphic to some degree. Thus, rather than speaking of anthropomorphism as an either/or phenomenon, Hamori suggests that scholars should identify it as a spectrum. To this end, she posits alternative approaches to anthropomorphism that take seriously the possibility that Israelite texts portray God in concretely anthropomorphic terms with some theological sophistication. First, she speaks of theophany as analogical language, which must be both affirmed and denied, such that God is “literally embodied, but without fully identifying himself as a human being” (54). In other words, theophany, like all analogical language, is multivocal, not univocal. Second, building on Wittgenstein, Hamori discusses theophany as a language-game in which the meaning of a word is determined by its use. For example, “God in embodied form does not have the same fixed meaning as a human in human form” (58). Thus, (concrete) anthropomorphisms do not limit the deity; rather they express divine freedom, which is “not limited even in regard to embodiment” (64).
Chapter 4 returns to the primary texts of inquiry, Gen 18:1–15 and 32:23–33. Hamori contends that Gen 18:1–15 and 19 form a single, early unit and that some elements of 18:17–33 were originally present to connect the two chapters. She then compares this unified text to Canaanite material in which scholars have assumed it finds its origin, arguing instead that, “as theophany, it is simply different from anything known from the region, with no reason to treat it either as evolved from any previous Canaan-like phenomenon or as evolved toward some proto-Jewish perspective” (82). In particular, she notes that, although the closest Ugaritic parallel, the Tale of Aqhat, displays many similarities (e.g., an unexpected anthropomorphic visit of a deity to a man followed by a meal), the differences are more striking. Most notably, Hamori stresses that, while YHWH and the two angels appear indistinguishable from humans, Kothar-wa-Hasis is so large that he can be seen from one thousand fields away. As a result, she contends that Gen 18:1–15 “reflects an early Israelite depiction of Yahweh in a manner that is not attested in Ugaritic literature” (95). Hamori likewise argues for an early date of Gen 32:23–33, especially since it is the source text for Hos 12:4–5. In the conflict it describes, Jacob fights with El instead of Esau as expected, who confirms to Jacob the patriarchal promise. Hamori contends that the “intense anthropomorphic intimacy” in both Genesis passages serves to establish the “unusually close bond” between God and Abraham and Jacob (102).

Chapter 5 explores the ’iš theophany in the context of biblical portrayals of the larger divine society, especially angels. Against the common identification of angels as anthropomorphic, Hamori argues instead that, “in the majority of mal’āk texts, the angels are depicted in specific non-human forms, or not on earth (in dreams or calling from heaven), or on earth in an unspecified form” (114). In the closest parallels to the ’iš theophanies, the angels either reveal their superhuman status by performing miraculous feats (Gen 19; Judg 13) or identify themselves as divine from the outset and refrain from graphically human behavior such as eating or fighting (Josh 5). Regarding the divine society in general, Hamori asserts that, while in heaven, its members are largely undifferentiated, overlapping in form and function, yet while on earth they have clearly distinguished roles, and their form is overtly related to their function. She concludes that the form of the ’iš theophanies, like these other manifestations of divine beings, is related to their function. Genesis 18 depicts YHWH’s final confirmation of the blessing and promise to the first patriarch, while Gen 32 describes God’s confirmation that the blessing and inheritance originally due Esau now belong to Jacob. Both texts stress the intimacy of the encounter and specialness of the divine-human relationship.

Chapter 6 offers a useful survey of anthropomorphic realism in the ancient Near East (Mesopotamia, Ugarit, Egypt, and Hittite Anatolia), with a special focus on Mesopotamia. She contends that, although similar in many respects, the ancient Near Eastern evidence
never portrays “gods interacting with humans in anthropomorphically realistic form, indistinguishable from humans, for the purpose of divine-human communication” (149). Thus, Hamori argues that the ‘iš theophanies are unique both in the Hebrew Bible and in the ancient Near East. Finally, in chapter 7, she offers her conclusions.

Hamori is to be lauded for a fine work that offers numerous valuable insights. Indeed, although her focus on two texts is rather specific, she brings in a wealth of helpful and impressive supporting material and theory. To name a few, her contention that anthropomorphism is unavoidable and that depictions of the divine should thus be regarded as falling along an anthropomorphic spectrum, her more precise taxonomy of physical anthropomorphism, her discussion of philosophy, her identification of theophany as a type of analogical language, and her survey of ancient Near Eastern evidence and biblical evidence for other beings in the divine world and their comparison with her ‘iš theophanies all are worthy of careful consideration and significantly bolster her argument and the value of her contribution.

However, while often a strength, her breadth of analysis is also at times a weakness, leaving insufficient space to provide an in-depth analysis of her primary texts. Similarly, she occasionally seems more interested in establishing the uniqueness of her texts than in describing the texts themselves. As such, her analysis ironically at times does not do enough to establish the uniqueness of her primary texts and at other times leaves elements of these texts unexplained. For example, she only mentions in passing the role of hospitality without offering any supporting evidence (9). In other words, she does not establish that Abraham’s treatment of his guests was standard practice in its ancient Near Eastern context. As such, she does not refute the alternative possibility that Abraham knew his guests were special from the outset but was not yet sure of their identity, thereby suggesting that, although they appeared as men, something about their appearance suggested that they were somehow more. In addition, although Hamori indicates that God loses the fight with Jacob (e.g., 102), she does not explore the implications. If God is no stronger than Jacob, why should Jacob trust him to carry out his promises? More broadly, why would the authors depict God in such a way? Hamori’s analysis of angels also at times focuses too much on differentiating them from God in the ‘iš theophanies, such that she unnecessarily minimizes the anthropomorphic depiction of angels. For example, her most prominent evidence for a nonanthropomorphic portrayal of the angel in Exod 3 is inconclusive. The text merely states that an angel appeared to Moses in the fire without saying anything more about the angel’s form (cf. Ezekiel’s depiction of God in 1:26–8). There must have been something about its appearance to indicate that it was an angel, especially when it is God who does the speaking from the bush (3:4). Indeed, although in the majority of texts angelic forms remain unspecified, when specified, they are predominantly anthropomorphic. Likewise, YHWH and his attendants in chapter 18
are unnecessarily distanced from his envoys in chapter 19, especially if, as she asserts, the texts are meant to be read as a unity. In both texts the divine beings appear initially as men, yet their speech (18) and actions (19) reveal them to be something more. The fact that YHWH reveals his otherness through speech instead of deed then should not be used to sharply divide the two theophanies. In addition, although very helpful, Hamori’s ancient Near Eastern survey is at times unnecessarily bent on establishing the uniqueness of the ’iš theophanies. For example, Isis’s encounter with the ferryman is dismissed rather cursorily, leading Hamori to conclude with regard to Egypt that “the gods do not take human form for the purpose of divine-human communication” (147). However, what other purpose could it serve in this instance when Isis takes human form for the express purpose of convincing him that she is an old woman and thus worthy of ferrying across the river? Finally, in positing a unified text in Gen 18 and 32, she does not take into account more recent German scholarship on its composition (Seebass’s commentary is her most recent entry). Nonetheless, despite these shortcomings, which are inevitable in such an ambitious undertaking, Hamori’s study is highly recommended and essential reading for anyone interested in divine anthropomorphism and theophany.