Habent sua fata libelli. As Terentianus Maurus so insightfully remarked, even books have their fates. This is well illustrated in the instance of the enigmatic work entitled Biblical Antiquities (Liber Antiquitatum Bibliarum, hereafter abbreviated LAB), ascribed to Philo, which presents a Midrashlike chronicle of biblical history from Adam to the death of Saul. This work, despite its intrinsic interest, was totally ignored by the church fathers and was almost completely unknown to modern scholars until its rediscovery by Cohn at the end of the nineteenth century. Though it is one of the most significant links between early haggadah and rabbinic Midrash and though it is obviously an important example of Pseudepigrapha, it was completely overlooked in the collections and commentaries of Charles, Kautsch, Pfeiffer, and Strack-Billerbeck, among others. And yet, if the date arrived at by Cohn, James, Kisch, Bogaert, and myself is correct, LAB was composed in the latter half of the first century, making it somewhat older than Josephus' Antiquities, which was issued in 93/94, and thus is, with the exception of the Genesis Apocryphon (among the recently discovered Dead Sea Scrolls), our oldest substantive midrashic work.

In content, LAB is a biblical history from Adam to the death of Saul. Its treatment, however, is very uneven. Thus, whereas the genealogies of Genesis (Chapters 5 and 10–11) are greatly embellished, most of the rest of Genesis is totally omitted. Again, whereas the account of the birth of Moses is developed at some length, most
of the rest of Exodus is omitted. Similarly, aside from the story of Balaam and the farewell address and death of Moses, most of the rest of the Pentateuch has been passed by. The central focus of the work is on the period of the Judges, constituting approximately 40 percent of the work; and the brief biblical account of the first judge, Othniel, has been replaced by an extensive, unparalleled narrative of Kenaz (Cenez), his father, who is, in terms of the space devoted to him, second in importance only to Moses himself.

That LAB is not by Philo is clear from the facts that the language is everywhere redolent of Hebraisms, that its narrative abounds in apocryphal materials, and that there are a number of actual contradictions between it and Philo, notably in the chronology from Adam to the flood, in the attitude toward Balaam, and in its consonance with a Palestinian type of Hebrew biblical text in several places where Philo, as is his wont, agrees with the Septuagint.\(^7\) Though it exists today only in Latin, it seems most likely that this is a translation from Greek, since it contains a number of Greek words. The Greek, in turn, appears to have been translated from a Hebrew original, since there are a number of Hebraisms, as we have noted, as well as a number of instances where the translator has misread or misunderstood his Hebrew original, in particular, since LAB often uses the Hebrew text rather than the Septuagint and since it also has close affinities with the Targumic tradition.\(^8\) If, therefore, as seems likely, the original language of LAB was Hebrew, it is most probable that it was composed in Palestine, since we do not know of any works in Hebrew composed outside of Palestine during this period or for centuries thereafter and since LAB has some striking similarities with IV Esdras and with the Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch, which emanate from Palestine, notably in the author's theological concerns, particularly eschatology and angelology.\(^9\)

The date of LAB is very much in doubt. I have suggested\(^10\) that Pseudo-Philo's statement (22.8) that Joshua determined in the new sanctuary at Gilgal the sacrifices that were offered continually "even unto this day" (\textit{usque in hodiernum diem}) indicates that the author would


\(^8\) See Feldman (\textit{op. cit.}, note 5), xxv–xxvii.


\(^10\) See Feldman (\textit{op. cit.}, note 5), xxviii.