

#### 4. Extra-Biblical Canon Witness

##### a. Pre-Christian era data

###### (1) **Prologue of Ecclesiasticus.**

In this apocryphal book is found the witness of Ben Sirach indicating that the sacred books of the Old Testament people are the law, the prophets and the "rest of the books." Ben Sirach was not discussing canon as we know it but offering a commentary as to the reason for what he is about to write. His allusions to this group of writings as constituting Jewish sacred history indicates knowledge of a set body of truth recognized well before 150 BC...his approximate date. This is one of the more "biblically centered" books in the collection we call the "Apocrypha".

(2) **Philo**, an approximate contemporary of the Lord, offers a view of the canon that is expressed thus by F.F. Bruce in *THE BOOKS AND THE PARACHMENTS*, pp 97-98:

The law to him is pre-eminently inspired, but he also acknowledges the authority of the other books of the Hebrew canon (although, as an Alexandrian, he used only the Septuagint version). He does not regard the apocryphal books as authoritative, and this suggests that, although these books were included in the Septuagint, they were not really accorded canonical status by the Alexandrian Jews. We cannot however, be sure about Philo's attitude towards some of the Old Testament books, especially a few in the "Writings", because he does not refer to them. We cannot dogmatically say that he accepted all the books of the Hebrew canon, though he may have well done so."

##### b. From the Christian era onward

(1) **Josephus**, the Jewish historian interested in expressing his orthodoxy, is very precise in *CONTRA APIONEM*, I:18. He attests the basic threefold division of the Old Testament and in the same breath gives the nature of the canon. He cites 22 books with 5 in the law, 13 in the prophets, and 4 in the poetry sections. Apparently he placed Ruth with Judges (as did many) and Lamentations with Jeremiah. To him the Minor Prophets are one book..the usual view.