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Is the Bible Too Thin? Weighing the Evidence for the Apocrypha

by J. Greg Sheryl

The first spoken words in the 1981 movie *Chariots of Fire* are, "Let us [now] praise famous men, and our fathers that begat us,"¹ a quote from the King James Version of Sirach, or Ecclesiasticus, 44:1. This book — not to be confused with the biblical book of Ecclesiastes — is part of the Apocrypha, most of which was written during a portion of the so-called "400 silent years" between the Old and New Testaments.

A RELATED MATTER: THE SEPTUAGINT

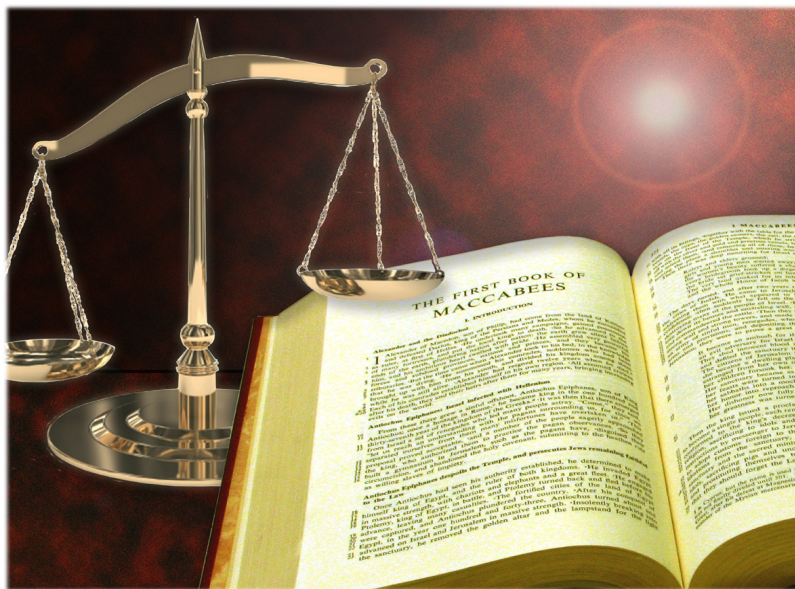
Any examination of the Apocrypha should begin with a look at the Septuagint (LXX). This word is derived from Latin *Septuaginta* (meaning "seventy") and refers to the 70 or 72 translators who are said to have produced the Pentateuch. It is the traditional but imprecise name given to the primary Greek version of the Hebrew Bible.² Further, we are told:

"The story of the origin of the LXX is told in the *Letter of Aristeas*, a pseudepigraphical [i.e., falsely attributed] book written in

the second half of the third century B.C. It states that Ptolemy II (called Philadelphus, king of Egypt, 285-247) wished to have a

translation of the Jewish law for his famous library in Alexandria. At his request the high priest Eleazer of Jerusalem sent seventy-two men, six from each tribe, to Egypt with a scroll of the Torah (the five books of Moses).³ In seventy-two days they translated one section each from this scroll and afterward decided on the wording together. Later writers elabo-

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