In his paper, “The Thematic Content of 4Q252,” George Brooke sets out a broad agenda for dealing with Qumran texts of this sort which stresses the appropriate contextual interpretation of the texts within the framework of Second Temple literature. Such an approach is two-edged: on the one hand, it correctly prevents inaccurate acontextual readings of the document, but on the other, it ties the text too closely to the larger intellectual world within which it was created before giving it the opportunity to speak for itself. Brooke emphasizes the externally focused point of view, at the cost, in my view, of the closer study of the document itself. But although I shall take issue strongly with his methodological priorities, the supporting material which he has gathered for his approach and the integrated interpretation which he has furnished still supply a valuable framework for those of us who choose to attack the text from the opposite, internally focused, vantage point.

In an earlier article dealing with the problem of genre in the study of Qumran documents, Brooke drew attention to a perceptive statement by E.D. Hirsch:

> Without helpful orientations like titles and attributions, readers are likely to gain widely different generic conceptions of a text, and these conceptions will be constitutive of their subsequent understanding.

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1 This paper is a synthesis of portions of the response to George Brooke's paper (published as "The Thematic Content of 4Q252," *JQR* 85 [1994]: 33–59), which I delivered at the colloquium on the Dead Sea Scrolls held at the Center for Judaic Studies of the University of Pennsylvania in May 1993, plus further reflections generated by the general discussion after the presentations. In order to save space, references to Brooke's paper are embedded in parentheses within my text. Other aspects of my original response appear in my article, "4Q252: From Re-Written Bible to Biblical Commentary," *JJS* 45 (1994): 1–27 (above 92–125). While taking the opportunity to summarize my treatment there, and in a couple of cases to correct and improve upon it, I shall focus in this paper on Brooke's method and analysis. I take this opportunity to thank Professor Brooke, the official editor of 4Q252, for the collegial fashion in which he has both shared material with me and read critically my earlier work on this text. I am grateful to Lawrence H. Schiffman and James C. VanderKam for commenting critically on an earlier version of this response.

4Q252, once hastily named “pesher Genesis” although its resemblance to other pesharim is minimal, is just such a text, lacking not only title and attribution, but beginning and end as well. The differences between Brooke and myself in our approaches to 4Q252 are generated substantially by our “widely different generic conceptions” of this truncated work, but also by what I believe to be significant differences in the presuppositions to be adduced and the methodology to be employed in approaching and analyzing such a document. Since some of Brooke’s methodology is implicit rather than explicit, I shall attempt to delineate clearly those points on which we differ. Brooke begins with a clear statement of purpose (35):

The aim of this paper is to consider the content and organization of what remains of 4Q252 to see whether it is possible to determine what may have been the purpose behind the collecting of the passages contained in the manuscript. Does 4Q252 contain a more or less arbitrary collection of materials, mostly related to Genesis in some way, or is there some kind of overarching principle behind what is included and in what order?

Whereas the goal of Brooke’s paper is eventually to determine purpose through a consideration of content and organization, an objective which I certainly share, there are essential earlier stages in the analytical process which are not reflected in his discussion.3 The major initial difference between my approach and Brooke’s is thus methodological and contextual. The very first step we must take in dealing with a document of this kind in my view is to read it on its own terms and not those of Second Temple literature generally, focusing on what is in it, and not on what is not in it, analyzing closely its substance and not its purpose. We must make sure to | avoid the preconceptions which mar the work on this text of both Lim and, of course, Eisenman-Wise.4 Premature speculation on issues like purpose, guiding principles and, for that matter, structure, runs the risk of confusing hypothesis and fact in later stages of the analysis.

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3 I do not mean to suggest, of course, that Brooke’s synthesis was not preceded by his own step-by-step analysis of the extant units of 4Q252, but that analysis is not shared with the reader of “The Thematic Content of 4Q252,” and can only be inferred. It will become obvious that our readings of this document differ radically.