READING HOSEA AT QUMRAN*

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How was the Book of Hosea understood at Qumran? Or, put differently: can we detect in the Qumran literature a consistent perspective of reading for a discrete prophetic book? And if so, how does it relate to the authors’ overall understanding of the book itself? These questions will be addressed in the following study. In this regard I will confine myself to those explicit Hosea quotations marked as such by quotation or interpretation formulas. They are encountered in the two pesharim on the Book of Hosea, the Damascus Document, and 4Q177—a work, originally designated as “Catena A”, in the forthcoming new DJD V edition renamed as Eschatological Commentary B. One further quotation might be found in Pesher Isaiah C.

1. The Pesharim on the Book of Hosea

Two Qumran pesharim are attested for the Book of Hosea: 4Q166 known as 4QpHos⁴ and 4Q167 known as 4QpHos⁵. A material reconstruction of both manuscripts has shown that we have to distinguish between two formally very distinct works, the first of which merely draws on select passages of Hosea while the latter quotes and comments on the entire book.¹ Regarding the designation of the two pesharim it might hence be advisable to use capital instead of superscript letters. In the following I will draw on my own edition of the texts.²

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* My thanks to Franziska Ede for preparing the English translation.
a) *4QpHos A*

*4QpHos A* consists of a single fragment with remains of two columns and according to palaeographic evidence might be dated to the late Herodian period. In contrast to the fragmentary preservation of the first column, the second column can be reconstructed almost entirely. This *pesher* is concerned with Hosea 2, a judgement discourse, portraying Israel as God’s spouse, an unfaithful adulteress.

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1. [“She did not know that] I myself had given her the grain[ and the new wine]

2. [and the oil, and] (that) I had supplied [silver] and gold (which) they made[ into Baal.” (Hos 2:10) Its interpretation is]

3. that [they ate and] were satisfied, and they forgot God who had f[ed them; and all]

4. his ordinances they cast behind them, which he had sent to them[ by the hand of]

5. his servants the prophets. But to those who led them astray they listened, and they honoured them[

6. and, like divine beings, they dread them in their blindness. *vacat* [  

7. *vacat*  

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3 The English translation follows Horgan, “Pesharim,” 117, with slight modifications.