4Q172 consists of fourteen fragments; these were named by John Allegro in the editio princeps as “Commentaries on unidentified texts.” The fragments were lumped together under this heading based on their material appearance and handwriting, which Allegro found to be similar to the pesher documents of 4Q161, 4Q166, 4Q171, and 4Q167, believing some of the fragments might originate in that group of texts. John Strugnell subsequently pointed out that this particular handwriting was widespread in cave 4, and that the text could have originated from other, non-pesherite material. Maurya Horgan has stated that “there is too little preserved on any of the fragments to determine the character or content of the texts.” Of course, the inclusion of them in her book about the pesharim, is due to her assumption that at least some of the fragments might belong in a pesharim text. I will attempt to show that something more can be said about the content and character of two of the larger fragments, 1 and 4.

The two fragments invite very diverse kinds of investigations. The selection of vocabulary in Fragment 1, for instance, has little to offer for an analysis of contents, even if it is one of the more “copious” fragments. Nevertheless, there is sufficient material for a more thorough analysis of formal traits. Fragment 4, on the other hand, contains vocabulary that suggests connections with specific scriptural sources and perhaps even interpretative traditions, but it does not lend itself easily to decisive formal analysis and cannot on formal grounds be defined as pesharim or any other genre.

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1 John M. Allegro, *Qumran Cave 4 I*, 50–1 + plate XVIII. Supplementary commentaries are offered in John Strugnell, “Notes en marge,” 218–9.
2 Strugnell, “Notes en marge,” 218.
Based primarily on רעב “hunger” in line 2, Horgan suggested that fragment 1 might be “connected with” 4QpPs⁴, in which the word occurs three times (1–10 II, 1; III, 2, 4). The only secure formal trace of the genre pesher, however, is found in frag. 14, which Allegro reluctantly placed in 4Q172. In frag. 1 it is possible to reconstruct the formulaic expressions בֶּשֶׁר in line 3 and אמר ואשר in line 2.⁵ The basis for such a proposal for line 2 is אמר ואשר. In the Dead Sea Scrolls the relative pronoun אשר with a copula is practically always followed by a verb in the 3rd pers. sg. masc. In about half of the cases the verb that follows is אמר, and the phrase אמר ואשר is without exception found in exegetical texts, most of which are pesharim.⁶ But how about the other cases containing verbs other than אמר? Do they seriously throw doubt on the solution suggested, that line 2 (and 3) contains remains from lost exegetical formulas?

Most instances of אמר ואשר followed by a verb other than אמר occur in legal texts, typically in the protasis of casuistic rules fixing the punishment for various violations, e.g., “and whoever lies knowingly, shall be punished for six months.”⁷ Negated clauses introduced by אמר ואשר express prohibitions. Besides legal texts, there are only a few instances of אמר ואשר followed by verbs other than אמר. Two of these are found

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⁴ The transcriptions below of frags. 1 and 4 result from discussions with Jesper Høgenhaven and Søren Holst. Up to this point our assessments have been based on the study of photographs.

⁵ In light of this there are possibly traces of such a formula also in line 1.

⁶ 4Q159 (4QOrdinances) 5 3; 4Q183 (4QHistorical Work) 1 II, 9; 4Q217 (4Qpap-Jubilees) 5 2; the one instance found in 4Q159 is located in frag. 5 with a pesher-like character not found in the rest of the document. In the various manuscripts of the Damascus Document (4Q266 6 I, 8; 8 II, 8; 4Q270 6 II, 19; 4Q271 3 4; 4 II, 7; 4Q272 1 I, 17) the phrase אמר ואשר introduces scriptural quotations from the Torah, namely Leviticus.

⁷ 1QS V, 14, 15, 16; VI, 25–26; VII, 3–4 (quoted), 5, 8, 9, 10, 13, and parallel texts in 4Q256; 4Q258; 4Q259; 4Q261; 4Q266. Furthermore, it also occurs in the regulative contexts of 4Q267; 4Q270; 4Q271; 4Q274; 4Q416; CD XIV, 21.