CHAPTER FIVE

THE WAR IN COLUMNS 3–19

Having properly understood the relationship between cols. 1 and 2, as well as the sequence of the war, one must then consider the rest of M in an effort to understand what it seeks to communicate about the forty year eschatological war. Is M primarily interested in the “day of their war against the Kittim” (יוֹם מַלָאָם הבָּטָיאִים) or in the “war of the divisions” (מַלָּאָם המַחְלָלוֹת)? Is it describing both? And if both, is each stage dealt with separately, or is the rest of M equally applicable to both stages of the war?

In the previous chapter, the differences between the two stages of the war were highlighted: since they are key for the rest of the investigation, I summarize here the most important points. The War against the Kittim will be waged by only three of the twelve tribes of Israel. It will take place before the full restoration of all the tribes of Israel, and before the Sons of Light have control of Jerusalem and its temple. As we have seen, the Kittim are associated to Assyria, and as such both are classified as the sons of Japheth. But the war will be against other enemies as well, such as Moab, Edom, Ammon, and Philistia whom, as we have seen, are in league with the Kittim. It will be short, possibly only a day long. It will include seven rounds, during three of which the Sons of Light suffer reversals. It will be a time of unparalleled tribulation, hurried unto its climax, and ending only because of God’s intervention and his archangel Michael. Yet the ensuing victory does not mean that evil will be totally exterminated, but it will allow for its power and rule to gradually shrink until it is no more. During that time, God’s people will be able to rule unhindered.

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1 See below, note 8.
In contrast to this first stage, the War of the Divisions will begin only once the entire nation of Israel will have been restored and in full control of Jerusalem and the temple. Instead of sending out the entire nation to war, there will be a conscription for each campaign, so that the army will be made up of chosen soldiers only. The enemies enumerated are no longer the Kittim and their coalition, but the sons of Shem, Ham and Japheth, with Assyria now being listed as one of the sons of Shem. The war will be long and drawn out, extending over a 33 year period, with campaigns lasting at least a year or two, possibly more. Nevertheless, at all times victory appears to be guaranteed, as there are no hints of any possibility of defeat or even setbacks. And when the fighting is over, Israel will be free from all its enemies and evil will have been exterminated. The age of fully realized redemption will have finally arrived.

1. COLUMNS 15–19: THE WAR AGAINST THE KITTIM

In light of these key differences, it is now possible to approach the rest of M to determine with what it may be dealing. One of the most obvious contrasts between the two stages is the presence and absence of the Kittim as the main enemy. Save for a single mention of the Kittim in 11:11, all other references to them are in cols. 15–19. Found five times in col. 1, the word appears twelve times in cols. 15–19 and is found at least once in each of those columns. This is one of the main reasons why scholars have linked these columns to col. 1.2 In 1QM 15:2 we read of “the king of the Kittim” (מלךʭהכתיי, an expression which appears only here in the entire Qumran corpus,3 although there seems to be little doubt that it was also found...