In his *Introduction to the Book of Isaiah* 1) T. K. CHEYNE claimed that Is. ii 6 ff. "refer as the expression 'the house of Jacob' (v. 6 cf. viii 17; ix 7) shows to 'both houses of Israel (viii 13), so that although the description in vv. 6-8 may be suggested chiefly by Judah, yet it cannot be wholly inapplicable to the Ephraimitish Kingdom" 2). Most modern commentators, however, have assumed without further discussion or stated as self-evident that the reference in this oracle is to Judah, or to Judah as symbolising the entire people of God 3). An interesting exception is H. CAZELLES who in a review of W. EICHRODT, *Der Heilige im Israel, Jesaja 1-12* in *VT* XII, 1962 p. 350 stresses the difficulty involved in fixing the precise historical circumstances of Is. ii 6 ff. and adds

"Je ne suis pas sûr qu'il s'agisse réellement du grand jour du jugement et que la maison de Jacob signifie l'ensemble d'Israel. Le prophète me paraît opposer Juda et Jerusalem pourvu du temple et de ses promesses de paix à Samarie qui l'attaque appuyée sur les Philistines et sur l'orient c. à d. Damas ii 6".

The thesis of this article is that CAZELLES' view is basically correct; that in fact Is. ii 6-9 is singularly inappropriate when applied to Judah.

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1) London, 1895.
2) op. cit. p. 16 cf. G. B. GRAY, *ICC Isaiah I-XXVII* Edinburgh 1912 ad loc. "Since the term 'House of Jacob' in v. 6 is ambiguous it must remain uncertain whether Isaiah is here depicting the doom of the Northern Kingdom (as in ix 7 ff. xvii 1-9) or the Southern Kingdom or of both together".
and Jerusalem, but pointedly relevant to the early period of Isaiah’s ministry, i.e. prior to the Syro-Ephraimitic war, when ‘the house of Jacob’ v. 6 is taken to signify the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

In view of the possible origin and growth of the Isaianic tradition 1) the issue cannot be decided by appeal to the meaning of the phrase “God of Jacob” in ii 3 and “house of Jacob” in ii 5. It is widely recognised that the oracle contained with minor variations in both Isaiah and Micah finds its original context in neither 2). Is. ii 5 looks very much like an editorial link which utilizes the key phrase ‘house of Jacob’ to join ii 2-4 to ii 6 ff.

The interpretation of ii 6b is far from convincing in most commentaries. The textual problem is hardly decisive, though we prefer to read

כי מלוא מקります קסמים ו네ום מכפלתים
בIPHER נוכרים יספר

i.e. chiastic order in 6ba, assuming that קסמים has accidentally dropped out of the MT because of similarity to מקלים and the near occurrence of the synonym נני 3).

On any reading of the text the basic problem is how to explain the reference to the ‘East’ or “diviners from the East” and “soothsayers like the Philistines” if the oracle has as its background the political and religious situation in Judah and Jerusalem during the early period of Isaiah’s ministry. Whether in the reign of Uzziah as J. Milgrom has recently argued 4) or in the period between Uzziah’s death and the Syro-Ephraimitic war, there is no evidence of Judah


2) Kissane’s arguments to the contrary are not convincing.

3) There is no need to emend ביר אבב to ויל עשות קסמים. The figurative use of ייל in Is. lvii 4 (cf. Jer. xxxi 3) is warrant enough for the belief that ייל could develop the same range of meaning as the more usual נן. We take to signify striking hands, entering into agreement with i.e. being involved in political alliance with. cf. Gray ICC ad loc. B.D.B.

4) op. cit. Milgrom’s arguments for dating Is. i 10 - vi 13 to Uzziah’s reign hardly seem conclusive. Certainly they have as their background conditions which prevailed in the latter part of Uzziah’s reign, but presumably such social, military, agricultural and theological conditions did not disappear over night with Uzziah’s death. Their legacy continued for some time into the reign of his successors.