

day, they follow the earlier practices:⁸ they *do not fear* YHWH and do not do as is required by their statutes and their practice⁹—the Torah and the command that YHWH commanded the sons of Jacob.” The reason for the apparent contradiction is obvious: *yr’ ’t YHWH* in v. 33 does not mean the same thing that it means in v. 34. Cogan and Tadmor, in their commentary on 2 Kings, note that vv. 34-40 contain language that is “Deuteronomistic throughout.” Verse 34 uses the deuteronomistic meaning of *yr’ ’t YHWH*: to worship YHWH to the exclusion of all other gods. Verse 39 also uses *yr’ ’t YHWH* in this sense, stating that worship of other gods directly contravenes the commandment to fear YHWH.

The objective of vv. 34-40 is to deny that the settlers “fear YHWH” in the deuteronomistic sense of the phrase (maintaining exclusive loyalty to Him). This is the main point of v. 34. Verses 35-38 are an exposition of the prohibition on worshipping other gods and of the requirement to worship YHWH alone; the exposition aims to illustrate that the settlers’ behavior is incompatible with this requirement. Verse 39 summarizes this requirement with the words *kī ’im ’et YHWH ’ēlohēkem tīrā’û*. Verse 40 returns to the topic of the new settlers, stating that, far from observing the requirements of the laws of YHWH, they follow the original practice of the lands whence they were exiled—that is, worship of multiple gods. Verses 34-40 might be summarized as: “until this day, the settlers in Samaria do not fear YHWH, since they do not follow His laws, which demand exclusive loyalty to Him.” The pith of the argument in the interruption is that including YHWH as one of the various gods to be worshiped does not constitute “fear of YHWH.”

This interruption is provoked by the use of *yr’ ’t YHWH* in vv. 28-33. These verses use *yr’ ’t YHWH* in a manner that translates the Akkadian *palāḥ ili*, referring to cultic worship of YHWH, without regard to the question of monolatry. Verses 34-40 react strongly to the implication that *yir’at YHWH* can be consistent with worship of other gods. They make it explicitly clear that the new settlers in Samaria were not in compliance with the demands implied by the expression *yr’ ’t YHWH*, because this expression is totally inconsistent with the worship of other gods. These verses illustrate the clash between the two meanings of “fear of YHWH.”

8. Perhaps this refers to the earlier practices of the Israelite inhabitants of Samaria, whom the chapter describes as having worshiped YHWH at the *bāmôt* while also worshipping other gods (17:9-12).

9. This refers to the statutes and normative practices that the Israelites were required to observe, according to the law.