

## God Repents?

*Then came the word of the Lord unto Samuel saying, "It **repenteth** me that I have set up Saul to be king, for he is turned back from following me and hath not performed my commandments." And it grieved Samuel, and he cried unto the Lord all night.*

— 1 Samuel 15:10 – 11, King James Version

Although the Aramaic verb *ittoeeth* is in the passive voice, it has several meanings and may be translated as, "I repent. I am sorry. I regret. I am taking it back." So this verse translates from Aramaic as, "Then the word of the Lord came to Samuel saying, 'I am sorry [I regret, I repent] that I have made Saul the king; because he has turned from following me and has not completed my commands.' It saddened Samuel, so he prayed before the Lord the entire night."

The truth behind the verse is that Samuel was the one who was regretting and was sorry that he made Saul king over Israel.

In his dreams, God appeared to him and told him that Saul wasn't the man to rule in Israel. But how could the Omniscient not know it was a mistake to choose Saul? God does not make mistakes, regret or repent. It was also Samuel who was seeking vengeance against the Amalekites because they had harassed his people, Israel, centuries before. But King Saul did not follow through with the orders that the prophet Samuel gave him. This is the reason for the rejection. King Saul was to kill every man, woman, child and animal from the tribe of Amalek.

Near Eastern Biblical scribes portrayed God as a man wearing garments, having a beard, sitting in a chariot, riding the clouds and, at times, repenting, regretting or even happy. These scriptural writers characterized God in this manner because they did not know what God was really like.

However, sometime later in Israel's history, Jesus of Nazareth taught that God is spirit. Spirit is intangible and cannot be seen. All these behaviors that are ascribed to God are replicas of human traits.

In other words, these ancient Biblical authors described God in a human manner and understanding so that common folk could grasp the situation. ✚



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