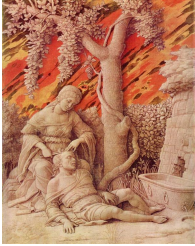


Delilah's Manipulation

"How can you say, 'I love you,'" she told him, "when your heart is not with me? This is the third time you have mocked me and not told me what makes your strength so great!" Because she nagged him day after day and pled with him until she wore him out, he told her the whole truth. - Judges 16:15-17a HCSB



Delilah was a beautiful young woman who lived in the valley of Sorek. I think that it is somewhat telling that the Midrash¹ tells us that the sorek is a fruitless tree. If ever there was a fruitless pursuit, it was Samson's pursuit of Delilah.

Apparently, beauty was the only consideration Samson ever gave of a woman. He saw a Philistine woman in Timnah and wanted her saying, "She looks good to me."² This woman used tears to betray him to his companions and married his best man. Later, he saw a harlot in Gaza and went in to her. The men of Gaza were told of Samson's visit and they made an unsuccessful attempt to kill him. Who do you think told the Gazites that Samson was there? Who if not the prostitute?

"Third time's the charm" they say, but they lie. This go-round, Samson actually loved the woman.³ However, her only concerns were pecuniary. Her god was Mammon and when the Philistines spoke her language, she dropped all pretense of loyalty to Samson.

Granted, the sum they offered was enormous! The five lords of the Philistines⁴ promised her 1,100 pieces of silver *each*! That's 5,500 pieces of silver. Seeing as ten pieces were a year's wage⁵ that would mean she was looking at 550 years of salary or the price of 275 slaves!⁶ In today's terms, the Philistines had put a \$27 million bounty on Samson's head!

With that in view, Delilah began her manipulation. She started with playful flirtation and he responded in kind.⁷ When that didn't work, she tried pleading and using the ploy of shame, "You have mocked me and told me lies! Won't you please tell me how you can be tied up?"⁸ When that didn't work, she got angry and (ironically) questioned his loyalty.⁹ Isn't it interesting how people often accuse others of what they are themselves most guilty? Unfortunately, we see that Samson was beginning to yield, because his lie was uncomfortably close to the truth. He told her it had to do with his hair – just not about cutting it.

Finally, Delilah got it right. She questioned Samson's love and used the same phrasing the father of Samson's first wife-to-be used.¹⁰ Just as his first fiancée,¹¹ she also nagged him incessantly until out of frustration he yielded.

The result? Death. Not just Samson's but of 3,000 of her own people. Beware manipulation for it cuts both ways. To seek to influence is one thing but to Yahweh Ro'iy¹² our motivations make all the difference. That path to wealth and glory may actually be a path to destruction.¹³

¹ Numbers Rabbah 9

² Judges 14:3 NASB

³ Judges 16:4

⁴ Judges 16:5 cp Joshua 13:3 and Judges 3:3

⁵ Judges 17:10

⁶ Genesis 37:28

⁷ Judges 16:6-9

⁸ Judges 16:10-12

⁹ Judges 16:13-14

¹⁰ Judges 15:2

¹¹ Judges 14:17 cp 16:16

¹² All Seeing God (Genesis 16:13)

¹³ Proverbs 5:3-6