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Every year for the last seven years I have witnessed Manhattan-Henge. Taking pictures of the sun setting in alignment with the street grid and more recently taking pictures of people taking pictures of the Sun, as the event has grown more popular the crowd watching has taken on a bigger role. Last night tonight and again in July 11 and 12 you can see the co-incidence of alignment. Our street grid is rotated 29 degrees north of true west and as days get longer the sun sets further north until the solstice and then the process starts to reverse. While it's good to know that there is someplace beyond the edge of the island, it is not always apparent. I am mindful of my place on the Manhattan street grid on a daily basis as I navigate about the city. On Manhattan-Henge it is very satisfying to have a sense of the connection between the orthogonal, almost arbitrary grid layout and something larger.

Living in Manhattan it is easy to lose edges, the horizon and become detached not from your surroundings but the larger frame of reference. I spend a lot of time at the office or at home and I am connected to the grid but not to anything that informs me about the larger perspective of the whole Island, the larger City, the Country or the Earth. Manhattan-Henge if its not too cloudy does provide a connection not only to the edges but also beyond where we can get enough perspective to place ourselves in space and time. Manhattan-Henge is about two scales one celestial very very large and the other personal my connection to my exact location in time and space.

Is there any significance to that fact that two Architects are here to share their thoughts about Adon Olam? Other than our chosen profession, we are both handsome and talented, we both have wives and daughters are smarter than us and we are both sailors. We are also parents and partners in interfaith families.

Even if unintended I see a connection between the prayer and our professions.

Adon Olam is a prayer, a poem a hymn and it can be sung to just about any tune. As a prayer its embraces the infinite and the personal. It is about scale. Adon Olam refers to the eternal creator who has, is and will reign, is without beginning or end.

Adon Olam starts with a statement about the infinite

You are our Eternal God, who reigned before any being had been created; when all was done according to Your will, then You were called Ruler.

And after all ceases to be, You alone will rule in majesty. You have been, are yet, and will be in glory. And You are One; none other can compare to or consort with You.

You are without beginning, without end. To You belong power and dominion.

A statement in the past present and future in unfathomable in scale but in the same time there is also a reflexive recognition that is very personal and very close intimate.

And You are my God, my living Redeemer, my Rock in times of trouble and distress. You are my standard bearer and my refuge, my benefactor when I call on You.

Into Your hands I entrust my spirit, when I sleep and when I wake, and with my spirit my body also; Adonai is with me and I shall not fear.

I am reminded of the film by Charles and Ray Eames the Powers of 10. In the film a camera is zoomed out from a picnic in Chicago to the limits of outer space and then back to the picnic to the hand of a man and then into hand to the atomic level. The infinitely small and the infinitely vast are explored in about nine minutes. Adon Olam accomplishes a similar feat in about a minute. Scale issues are something that Architects know about. The scale of large public halls and the immediacy of tactile surfaces. The infinitely large and infinitely small inform and reinforce each other in an expanding or contracting perspective.

My initial reaction after agreeing to participate in the prayer project was from my inner fidgety kid attending services forty years ago was the realization that if we are singing Adon Olam, services are almost over but on further reflection I think the prayer is a reminder to connect both beyond ourselves and within. To locate our positions spiritually by connecting with something much larger and by connecting to something very close and personal.

Andrew Wilkinson

Architect

Thank you Rabbi

Shabatt shalom everybody.

So, I've been invited to speak to you tonight about Adon Olam as part of the rabbi's prayer project. I would like to start this discussion by stating that nobody will walk away from my contribution tonight with any enhanced understanding about this prayer. I promise. What you know now, is what you walk away with later. The take away is nothing! Why? Because I'm catholic!. Although, I think it is so kind and sweet that the rabbi has on a occasions approached my wife...are you sure he's not Jewish. I'm not Jewish.

Although really, with three kids I'm halfway to being orthodox.

Sweet though...thank you rabbi. So, I'm here talking to you tonight because of a few things...one: my wife brought us to this temple more than 8 years ago, and my family has developed wonderful relationships along the way. And that includes myself. Jill by the way, and to help fill in the blanks, was Schwartz before becoming Wilkinson. Yea. Schwartz to Wilkinson. From main line Philadelphia Jewish girl to sounding like an interior designer from Darien Connecticut. I'm also here because living with my wife

and three daughters, I rarely get a chance to talk. So here I am! Yep. I'm that desperate to be heard, that I will accept an invitation to speak about something I know absolutely nothing about! Nothing! But, even with that said, I am an important person around this temple. And I know it. I see it. Because on some Shabbat services, my family will make up to 20 percent of the choir! 20 percent! Three kids in the choir here!

So, for a personal or philosophical take on Adon Olam, I will have to take a step or two back.

But in making good on no new information here, I thought I should read the English translation to a group who, really already knows it in English and Hebrew. Sit tight, this is for my own indulgence:

*Adon olam is The Lord of the Universe who reigned
before anything was created.
When all was made by his will
He was acknowledged as King.*

*And when all shall end
He still all alone shall reign.
He was, He is,
and He shall be in glory.*

*And He is one, and there's no other,
to compare or join Him.
Without beginning, without end
and to Him belongs dominion and power.*

*And He is my G-d, my living G-d.
to Him I flee in time of grief,
and He is my miracle and my refuge,
who answers the day I shall call.*

*To Him I commit my spirit,
in the time of sleep and awakening,
even if my spirit leaves,
G-d is with me, I shall not fear.*

When reading this, I spent some time recalling my younger days of sitting in mass with my family, and if any of these words reminded me of any passages that I might find as a companion, or counterpart to a catholic prayer. I can nearly recite the entire catholic mass, and though not scholarly by any formal translation, it is a passage that came to my mind first. It is the Gloria...also a hymn, and a song of praise found in the introductory rites portion of a catholic mass. I won't sing it. My daughters would be embarrassed for years. But I'll read it:

*Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.*

*Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory. Lord Jesus Christ,
only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us; you are seated at the right hand of
the Father: receive our prayer. For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord,
You alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.*

So, a Catholic prayer comparison was my first step back from a pure discussion of Adon Olam. The next step back – don't worry Rabbi, we are still under the umbrella of prayer project – is what a prayer is to me, today, and neither as a practicing catholic, or practicing Jew. Although, with the number of times a year I attend services here at the temple, I'm a far better Jew than catholic these days...so maybe someday rabbi...someday.

So the next step back with this discussion is offering what a prayer is for me today. Not as a young catholic boy in south jersey, but for me as an adult with a family, and a certain amount of practical life experiences to look back upon. For me, and for many, prayers are simply words of spiritual guidance. They offer comfort during difficult times. They help reconcile the unreconcilable. They give hope and nourish the spirit to take on and give meaning for the next day. They celebrate. They are joyous. What prayers are to some people, that is what music is for me. Secular music has become my hymn and my prayer. When things are not well, hearing just the right song can completely shift or reframe my thoughts to a far better place. And when I listen to certain songs, I hear the preachings of a life poorly led, decisions made that could have been better. Songs of redemption. Songs of praise. And songs of explaining the unexplainable.

Each one of us, right now, at this moment, can think of a song or think of specific music that can make us smile, lift our spirits, or provide comfort. Each of us can find comfort in our music. A prayer.

I thought I would read a few out takes of some of a few secular prayers. I am not going to credit these passages, as I wanted the ring of the words to be louder than the artist. You can ask me afterwards who the artists are...happy to tell ya.

On life and living:

*The secret of life is enjoying the passage of time.
Any fool can do it, there ain't nothing to it.
Nobody knows how we got to the top of the hill.
But since we're on our way down, we might as well enjoy the ride.*

On love:

*My heart will soar
With love that's rare and real
My smiling face will feel every cloud
Then higher still beyond the blue until
I know I can like any man reach out my hand
And touch the face of God*

On death:

*Shadows are fallin' and I'm runnin' out of breath Keep me in your heart for a while
If I leave you it doesn't mean I love you any less Keep me in your heart for a while
When you get up in the mornin' and you see that crazy sun Keep me in your heart for a
while
There's a train leavin' nightly called "When All is Said and Done" Keep me in your heart
for a while*

Lastly, music does not need to contain words to have a meaning as a prayer...my most content, informative listening is often piano studies, or piano solo pieces. I hear prayers of music all over the city. A raucous musician in the subway can capture the energy, and meaning, of why we live in a city, and within it a type prayer of affirmation.

As I enjoy the passage of time, I have become more interested and curious about other peoples music. And far more accepting of it – Even country music! I find myself asking younger people what they are listening to...I think it is reflective of how they think, life outlook and sometimes their values. With the accessibility of digitized music, it can be there all the time. And that even more at hand message within and around the music can be comforting, sometimes guiding, and sometimes yes, reframe your thinking. It can be something you turn to. Just Listen.

You'll find the message you need.

I want to thank the rabbi again for including me in this prayer project that has also tonight become an interfaith detour. And thanks to all of you for your indulgence. This really is the longest anyone has listened to me in a very long time.

Shabbat shalom.