**4. Wisdom, Insight and Understanding**

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| You generously give people wisdom, and you teach human beings insight.Generously give us wisdom, insight and understanding.Blessed are you Adonai, who generously gives wisdom. | אַתָּה חונֵן לְאָדָם דַּעַת. וּמְלַמֵּד לֶאֱנושׁ בִּינָה: חָנֵּנוּ מֵאִתְּךָ דֵעָה בִּינָה וְהַשכֵּל. בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', חונֵן הַדָּעַת. |

After the first three paragraphs that begin every Amidah, we continue with paragraphs in which we ask God for something. In the first paragraph, we ask for wisdom.

* Why do you think we begin the Amidah with a request for wisdom?
* Does wisdom come from God? If not, where does wisdom come from?

**Wisdom in the Jewish Tradition**

**Shulkhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim 115:1**

Because the difference between human beings and animals is in their wisdom and understanding, they set up this tefillah first (after the opening three), for without understanding, there can be no prayer.

**Mishnah Avot 4:1**

Ben Zoma said: Who is wise? One who learns from every person.

**Bavli Tamid 32a**

Alexander the Great asked the sages: Who is called wise? They said to him: Who is wise? One who sees what happens before it happens.

* How do these sources define who is wise? What would you expect them to say?
* If you were asked "who is wise" what would you answer?

**Midrash Tehillim 119:24**

"Get wisdom, get understanding" (Proverbs 4:5): He who has wisdom but no understanding is like a person with bread in his hand but nothing to eat with it. And he who has understanding but no wisdom is like a person with a tasty dish in his hand but no bread to eat it with. But he who has both wisdom and understanding is like a person who has in his hand bread and a tasty dish—he eats both and he is full.

* What is the difference between wisdom and understanding?
* How is wisdom like bread and understanding like a tasty dish?
* Can you think of an example in your life in which one type of intelligence depends on another type of intelligence?

**Wisdom in the World**

“You can tell whether a man is clever by his answers. You can tell whether a man is wise by his questions.”

Naguib Mahfouz, Egyptian Novelist, 1988 Nobel Prize for Literature

## "Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world."

 Albert Einstein