HEBREW WORD STUDY

Who Stood in the Council?

Job 15:8 and the Hebrew Word Sôd

Essay · By **Larry Herzog Jr.** · *Ordinary Means*
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Council or Counsel?

In a Bible study on Job 15, someone noticed that the translations on the table did not agree. The Berean Standard Bible has Eliphaz ask Job, "Do you listen in on the council of God or limit wisdom to yourself?" The New King James asks, "Have you heard the counsel of God?" The King James says "the secret of God."

In English those are not small differences. A *council* is a body of people gathered to deliberate. *Counsel* is advice, a plan, a purpose. One is a room; the other is what is said in it. The two words sound the same, but they do not mean the same thing, so it is fair to ask which one Eliphaz actually said.

The answer is that he said neither, and both. The Hebrew word is סוֹד (*sôd*), and it does not divide the way English does. It names the closed circle of trusted people and the confidential talk that happens inside that circle. Our translations are forced to choose. The Hebrew is not, and the overlap turns out to carry the whole weight of Eliphaz's question, and a good deal of the weight of the book of Job.

The Verse in Its Setting

Job 15 opens the second round of speeches. Eliphaz, the eldest and most measured of Job's friends, has run out of patience. Job's own words condemn him, Eliphaz says (15:6). Then he asks a string of sarcastic questions meant to put Job in his place:

- Were you the first man ever born? Were you brought forth before the hills? (15:7)
- Do you listen in on the *sôd* of God, or limit wisdom to yourself? (15:8)
- What do you know that we do not? (15:9)
- Gray-haired and aged men are on our side (15:10).

The first question likely echoes Wisdom's own voice in Proverbs 8:25, who was brought forth before the hills. Eliphaz is asking whether Job imagines himself to be Wisdom, present at creation. Verse 8 presses the same point from another angle: were you admitted into God's private circle?

The Hebrew of 15:8 reads:

Like most Hebrew poetry, the verse has two parallel lines:

Line	Hebrew	Transliteration	BSB
15:8a	הַבְסוֹד אֱלוֹהַּ תִּשְׁמָע	*ha-bᵉsôd ʾĕlôah tišmāʿ*	Do you listen in on the council of God
15:8b	וְתִגְרַע אֵלֶיךָ חָכְמָה	*wᵉ-tigraʿ ʾēlêkā ḥokmāh*	or limit wisdom to yourself?

Three pieces sit on the front of the first word, exactly as the Explorer shows them:

1. The question marker: הַ (*ha-*).
2. The preposition "in": בְּ(*bᵉ-*).
3. The noun *sôd*: סוֹד, in construct with אֱלוֹהַּ(*ʾĕlôah*, God), giving "the *sôd* of God."

Hebrew normally puts the verb first. Here the prepositional phrase is pulled to the front for emphasis: "Is it *in God's sôd* that you listen?" The emphasis falls on where Job supposedly was, not only on what he supposedly heard.

The second line of the verse (15:8b, "or limit wisdom to yourself?") completes the picture. Its verb *gāraʿ* means to draw off or hold back, and with *ʾēlêkā* ("to yourself") it describes hoarding: drawing wisdom off into your own keeping. Together the two lines describe an eavesdropper who slipped into God's private meeting and walked out with knowledge no one else has. That is the charge Eliphaz lays at Job's feet.

One Hebrew Word, Two English Words

The standard Hebrew lexicon, Brown-Driver-Briggs, glosses *sôd* simply as "council, counsel," both words side by side, and then sorts its uses along a single line:

1. **Council:** a group in confidential conversation.
    1. A circle of intimates, one's inner circle.
    2. An assembly or company, in one place a company of heavenly beings.
2. **Counsel:** what is said in that confidential conversation.
    1. Counsel or deliberation itself, including close friendship and, on the dark side, plotting.
    2. A secret that can be kept or revealed.
    3. Intimacy with God.

The common thread is not "meeting" or "advice." It is **confidentiality**. A *sôd* is the inside of a closed door: who is allowed in, and what is said once the door is shut. English happens to have separate words for the people behind the door and the words spoken there. Hebrew does not, because to the Hebrew mind they are the same thing seen from two sides.

The root is less certain. Strong's derives *sôd* from *yāsad*, the verb for laying a foundation, which in a reflexive form means to take counsel together, literally to press close (Ps. 2:2; 31:13). Some lexicons treat *sôd* as its own root instead, with possible cousins in related Semitic languages meaning to speak privately. Either way, the picture is the same: people drawn close enough to talk without being overheard.

English, oddly, has its own homophone accident here. *Council* comes from Latin *concilium*, a summoning together. *Counsel* comes from Latin *consilium*, deliberation or advice. They are different Latin words that converged in English pronunciation, and for centuries English writers spelled them interchangeably. The neat modern distinction our Bible study noticed is something English created, not something the Hebrew contains.

How the Translations Render Job 15:8

The English tradition began with "counsel," detoured through "secret," and since the twentieth century has mostly settled on "council." The table runs oldest to newest.

Translation	Date	Job 15:8a	Leans toward
Latin Vulgate (Jerome)	c. 400	*numquid consilium Dei audisti*	counsel (*consilium*)
Wycliffe	1380s	the counsel of God	counsel
Luther (German)	1534	*Gottes heimlichen Rat*	both (*Rat* means either)
Coverdale	1535	the secrete councell of God	spelling not yet fixed
Geneva / Bishops'	1560 / 1568	the secret counsell of God	counsel
Douay-Rheims	1609	God's counsel	counsel (from the Vulgate)
King James	1611	the secret of God	the secret content
Revised Version / ASV	1885 / 1901	the secret counsel of God	counsel
Darby	1890	the secret council of God	council
Young's Literal	1898	the secret counsel of God	counsel
JPS	1917	Dost thou hearken in the council of God?	council
RSV / NRSV / ESV	1952 / 1989 / 2001	listened in the council of God	council
NKJV	1982	the counsel of God	counsel
NASB 1995	1995	the secret counsel of God	counsel
NET	2005	listen in on God's secret council	council
NIV	2011	listen in on God's council	council
LEB	2012	God's confidential discussion	the talk itself

Translation	Date	Job 15:8a	Leans toward
BSB	2016 / 2020	listen in on the council of God	council
CSB	2017	listen in on the council of God	council

Three observations matter.

First, the older English tradition is Latin-shaped. Jerome's *consilium* means deliberation, advice, a plan. Wycliffe and the Douay translated the Latin, so they said "counsel." The Reformation Bibles worked from Hebrew, but they inherited the Latin vocabulary, and "secret counsel" became the standard English phrase.

Second, the old spellings cannot settle the question. Coverdale's "councell" and Geneva's "counsell" come from a time when English spelling was not fixed and the two words were often confused. The sharp modern distinction between *council* and *counsel* is younger than the English Bible.

Third, Luther's German had no problem to solve. *Rat* in German means both advice and the body that gives it (a *Stadtrat* is a city council). Luther's "Gottes heimlichen Rat" carries the full range of *sôd* in one word, which English cannot do. When modern versions choose "council," they are reading the preposition *bᵉ-* ("in") as a place you stand. When the NKJV and NASB choose "counsel," they are reading the verb *šāmaʿ* ("hear") as taking a content you hear. Both are reasonable readings of the same Hebrew.

What the Ancient Witnesses Show

The council-or-counsel question is a translation question, not a textual one. The Hebrew of Job 15:8 is secure. But the ancient versions are worth a look, because they show that translators two thousand years ago faced the same problem we do, and mostly solved it the other way.

The Hebrew text

The Masoretic Text reads *ha-bᵉsôd ʾĕlôah* without any significant variant. The Dead Sea Scrolls cannot help here: of the six Job manuscripts from Qumran (four Hebrew, two Aramaic), none preserves chapter 15. The Hebrew fragments (4Q99, 4Q100, 4Q101, 2Q15) cover parts of chapters 8, 9, 13, 14 and 31 to 37. The Aramaic Job targum from Cave 4 covers only bits of chapters 3 to 5, and the larger one from Cave 11 begins at 17:14. That Cave 11 targum does reach the other two sôd verses in Job, but barely helps: at 19:19 it preserves "all the men of…" and breaks off just before the word for sôd, and its chapter 29 survives only from verse 7 on. So for 15:8 we rely on the medieval Hebrew manuscripts and the ancient translations.

The ancient translations of Job 15:8

Witness	Language	Word for *sôd*	Meaning	Leans toward
Septuagint (Rahlfs)	Greek	σύνταγμα (*syntagma*)	an ordinance, an arrangement	counsel
Brenton's Greek text	Greek	σύνταγμα, plus an extra clause with σύμβουλος (*symboulos*)	ordinance; "has God used you as His counselor?"	both
Targum of Job	Aramaic	ܪܙܐ (*rāz*)	secret, mystery	counsel
Peshitta	Syriac	ܪܙܐ (*rāzā*)	mystery	counsel
Vulgate	Latin	*consilium*	deliberation, plan	counsel

Not one of these versions renders Job 15:8 with a word that simply means "assembly," even though the Greek uses such words for sôd elsewhere. The Greek, Aramaic, Syriac and Latin translators all heard Eliphaz asking about God's *secret plan*, not God's *meeting*. The modern preference for "council" rests instead on the Hebrew preposition "in" and on the clear parallels in Psalm 89:7 and Jeremiah 23:18. That is a legitimate reason, but readers should know the older witnesses lean the other way.

Four details worth knowing

1. Two printed Septuagints disagree at this verse. Both texts discussed here are the Septuagint; they are different editions of it. The original Old Greek of Job was roughly a sixth shorter than the Hebrew. Origen later filled the gaps from other Greek versions, and manuscripts and printed editions differ in how much of that added material they carry. The modern critical edition (Rahlfs, 1935, agreeing here with Codex Vaticanus) has two short lines at 15:8: "Have you heard the ordinance of the Lord? And has wisdom come to you?" Brenton's English Septuagint (1844), still the most widely used, was made, as its 1851 title page says, "according to the Vatican edition": the printed Sixtine text (Rome, 1587), which was based on Codex Vaticanus but does not match it at every point. That text, found in some Greek witnesses, has three lines, inserting "Or has God used you as His counselor?" between the two. The inserted line looks like a second translation of *sôd*, this time in the personal sense, sitting beside the first. Some ancient scribe apparently felt that "ordinance" did not capture the whole word and added the human, relational side. (Brenton also renders the last line "has wisdom come *only* to thee?" The "only" is his, drawing out the emphatic "to you" in the Greek.)

2. The Aramaic and Syriac word is "mystery." Both the Targum and the Peshitta render *sôd* with *rāz*, a Persian loanword. It is the same word Daniel uses for the king's dream, the mystery that God alone reveals (Dan. 2:18-19, 27-30, 47). The Targum uses it for all three

occurrences in Job (15:8; 19:19; 29:4). The Peshitta even rephrases the second line as "was wisdom revealed to you?" These translators read Job 15:8 through the lens of revelation: a hidden thing that only God can disclose.

3. Jerome read the second line differently. The Vulgate has "Have you heard God's counsel, and shall His wisdom be inferior to you?" Jerome took the verb *gāraʿ* in its sense of "diminish" and made God's wisdom its subject. The Douay-Rheims and Wycliffe inherited this reading. The Hebrew more naturally means "draw wisdom off to yourself," as every modern version has it.

4. Across the Old Testament, the Greek translators sometimes guessed at a different root. In the Septuagint, *sôd* is usually βουλή (*boulē*), συνέδριον (*synedrion*) or συναγωγή (*synagōgē*). *Boulē* is worth pausing on: like German *Rat*, it means both counsel and the council that gives it (the *boulē* of Athens was its city council). But in a few places the Greek reads as if the translator saw a different word in the unpointed consonants, or reworked the verse:

- Psalm 25:14 has κραταίωμα (*krataiōma*), "strength" or "support," and Jeremiah 23:18 and 23:22 have ὑπόστημα / ὑπόστασις (*hypostēma, hypostasis*), "foundation" or "substance." These look like readings from the related root *yāsad*, "to found."
- Ezekiel 13:9 and Amos 3:7 have παιδεία (*paideia*), "discipline," as if the translator read *yāsar*, "to discipline." In the Hebrew script, *d* (ד) and *r* (ר) are easily confused.
- Psalm 55:14 has ἐδέσματα (*edesmata*), "delicacies": "you sweetened delicacies" for "we shared sweet fellowship." The cause is unclear.
- Proverbs 3:32 is a different case. The Greek renders *sôd* well, with the verb συνεδριάζει (*synedriazei*, "sits in council"), but transposes the verse: the transgressor becomes the subject throughout, unclean before the Lord and not sitting among the righteous. God's friendship with the upright becomes the transgressor's exclusion from their council. Proverbs 20:19 is missing from the Greek altogether, and the line about another's secret in 25:9 has no Greek equivalent.

Those explanations are reasonable inferences from the Greek, not settled facts. But the general pattern holds. *Sôd* is a rare, compact word, and translators without vowel points sometimes stumbled on it. The Hebrew tradition, preserved by the Masoretes with its vowels, is what tells us that Amos 3:7 is about God revealing His *plan*, not His *discipline*. That is a small but real example of why confessional Lutherans have always gone back to the Hebrew and Greek sources, *ad fontes*, rather than resting on any translation, ancient or modern. Luther made the point in a treatise addressed, fittingly, to the councilmen of Germany's cities: "The languages are the sheath in which this sword of the Spirit is contained" (LW 45:360).

Every Occurrence of Sôd

Sôd occurs 21 times in the Hebrew Old Testament. The table follows Brown-Driver-Briggs in sorting them by sense, from the circle itself to what is said in it. Verse numbers are English; four Psalms are one verse higher in Hebrew (55:15, 64:3, 83:4, 89:8). Rows marked ★ are the ones that shed the most light on Job 15:8 or on the range of the word.

Reference	Who or what	Sense	BSB	ESV	NKJV
★ Gen 49:6	Simeon and Levi's violent plotting	the circle	council	council	council
★ Ps 89:7	the holy ones around God	the circle (heavenly)	council	council	assembly
Ps 111:1	the upright gathered for worship	the circle	council	company	assembly
Jer 6:11	young men gathered in the street	the circle	gathered together	gatherings	assembly
Jer 15:17	revelers Jeremiah refused to join	the circle	band	company	assembly
★ Ezek 13:9	God's people, from which false prophets are cut off	the circle	council	council	assembly
★ Job 19:19	Job's closest friends	intimates	best friends	intimate friends	close friends
Ps 55:14	the betraying friend	intimate fellowship	sweet fellowship	sweet counsel	sweet counsel
★ Job 29:4	God's nearness over Job's tent	intimacy with God	friendship	friendship	friendly counsel
★ Ps 25:14	God with those who fear Him	intimacy with God	confides in	friendship	secret
Prov 3:32	God with the upright	intimacy with God	is a friend to	in his confidence	secret counsel
★ Jer 23:18	the true prophet in God's presence	council and counsel	council	council	counsel
★ Jer 23:22	the same	council and counsel	council	council	counsel
★ Job 15:8	**Eliphaz's taunt**	**council and counsel**	**council**	**council**	**counsel**

Reference	Who or what	Sense	BSB	ESV	NKJV
Prov 15:22	many advisers	counsel, deliberation	counsel	counsel	counsel
Ps 64:2	the wicked conspiring	hostile counsel	scheming	secret plots	secret plots
Ps 83:3	nations conspiring against Israel	hostile counsel	with cunning they scheme	crafty plans	crafty counsel
Prov 11:13	the gossip	a confidence	secret	secrets	secrets
Prov 20:19	the gossip again	a confidence	secrets	secrets	secrets
Prov 25:9	a neighbor's private matter	a confidence	confidence	secret	secret
★ Amos 3:7	God's plan revealed to the prophets	God's revealed counsel	plan	secret	secret

The BSB alone uses more than a dozen English words for this one Hebrew noun. That is not inconsistency. It is a measure of how much ground *sôd* covers that English must divide up.

Two near relatives belong beside the list though they are not the noun. Psalm 2:2 and Psalm 31:13 use the verb *yāsad* in a reflexive form, "take counsel together" or "conspire" (BSB: "gather together"; "conspire"). Many lexicons connect the noun to this verb, and the picture fits: people pressed together to deliberate, whether the kings against the LORD's Anointed or the enemies against the psalmist.

The Occurrences That Illuminate Job 15:8

Of the 21 occurrences, ten deserve a closer look. Some show what Eliphaz meant; others show how far the word reaches.

Jeremiah 23:18 and 23:22: the closest parallel. "But which of them has stood in the council of the LORD to see and hear His word?" Same construction as Job 15:8: the preposition "in" plus *sôd* plus the divine name, with a verb of hearing. Then 23:22: "But if they had stood in My council, they would have proclaimed My words to My people." Jeremiah holds both senses at once. You *stand in* a council; you *hear* and *proclaim* counsel. This is why the NKJV, consistent with its choice in Job, says "counsel" here too, and why every other modern version says "council." The pair of verses proves that the Hebrew writers felt no tension between the two.

Psalm 89:7: the heavenly court. "In the council of the holy ones, God is greatly feared." This is the setting Eliphaz has in mind, the same assembly of heavenly beings that gathers before the LORD in Job 1:6 and 2:1. It establishes that "the *sôd* of God" in Job 15:8 most naturally means a place with members, not merely a thought in God's mind.

Amos 3:7: the counsel revealed. "Surely the Lord GOD does nothing without revealing His plan to His servants the prophets." Here *sôd* is the content, God's plan. And it is not hoarded. Amos answers Eliphaz's second line before Eliphaz asks it: God does not limit wisdom to Himself either. He reveals it through those He sends.

Job 19:19 and 29:4: the word inside Job. These give the human and the divine sides of *sôd* as intimacy. In 19:19 the men of Job's *sôd* are his best friends, now turned against him. In 29:4 God's *sôd* is the friendship that once rested on his tent. Read with 15:8, they show that Job's grief is not about access to classified information. It is about a relationship.

Psalm 25:14: the promise of intimacy. "The LORD confides in those who fear Him, and reveals His covenant to them." The BSB turns the noun into a verb, which captures the sense well. God's *sôd* is not stormed by the clever. It is given to those who fear Him, and what He confides is His covenant, that is, His promise.

Genesis 49:6: the first occurrence. Jacob refuses to enter the council of Simeon and Levi, whose violence he curses. The first use of the word shows that a *sôd* can be a circle of wicked intimates as easily as holy ones. The word itself is neutral; everything depends on whose circle it is.

Ezekiel 13:9: excluded from the council. The false prophets "will not belong to the council of My people." The prophet who invents visions loses his place in the very circle he pretended to speak for. This is the mirror image of Jeremiah 23. Eliphaz, with his night-whisper (Job 4:12-16), stands closer to Ezekiel's false prophets than he realizes.

Proverbs 11:13: the confidence betrayed. "A gossip reveals a secret, but a trustworthy person keeps a confidence." At the far end of the range, *sôd* is simply a private matter between people. It shows the moral weight the word carries: a *sôd* is a trust. To disclose it wrongly is betrayal. To disclose it rightly, as God does in Amos 3:7, is an act of friendship.

The Council in the Book of Job

Eliphaz's question is funnier, and sadder, than he knows, because the book of Job has already taken the reader into God's council. Chapters 1 and 2 open twice on the same scene: the sons of God come to present themselves before the LORD, and the accuser comes among them (1:6; 2:1). This is the heavenly court that Psalm 89:7 calls the *sôd* of the holy ones and that Micaiah saw in 1 Kings 22:19-22. The reader stands in that room and hears what is said. Job never does. Neither does Eliphaz.

So when Eliphaz sneers, "Do you listen in on the council of God?" the honest answer for everyone on stage is no. None of the speakers knows why Job suffers. The friends' whole case depends on pretending they do.

The irony sharpens when you remember how Eliphaz began. In his first speech he grounded his authority in a private revelation: a word that came to him stealthily, a whisper in the night, a spirit gliding past his face (4:12-16). Eliphaz rebukes Job for claiming access to God's secret counsel, yet He is the only one of the three friends who claims to have re-

ceived one. (Elihu later appeals to the Spirit's breath and to God speaking in dreams, 32:8; 33:14-18, but he is not one of the three.) He accuses Job of the very thing he himself is doing.

Sôd appears three times in Job, and together they trace the arc of the book:

1. **15:8, God's council.** Eliphaz denies that Job has any access to it.
2. **19:19, Job's own circle.** "All my *best friends despise me" (literally, "the men of my sôd")*. The friends who should have been his inner circle have become his prosecutors.
3. **29:4, God's friendship.** Job looks back to the days when God's *sôd* rested over his tent. What Job grieves is not lost information but lost intimacy, the felt nearness of God.

Job never claims to have eavesdropped on heaven. He longs for God to speak to him (13:3, 22; 23:3-5; 31:35). When God finally does speak from the whirlwind, He does not open the council minutes from chapters 1 and 2. He asks, "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?" (38:4). That is Eliphaz's question returned to all of them, with Eliphaz included.

The ending settles it. The LORD tells Eliphaz that he and his two friends have not spoken rightly about God, as Job has, and that Job must pray for them (42:7-8). The man who was accused of pretending to sit in God's council is the one God appoints to intercede before Him.

The Confessional Lutheran Payoff

The overlap of council and counsel is not a curiosity for word nerds. It says something Lutherans confess about how sinners come to know God at all: no one gets into God's counsel by climbing into God's council. God opens His *sôd* by speaking, and He speaks where He has promised to speak.

1. The hidden God and the revealed God

Eliphaz and his friends are trying to read God's secret counsel off the surface of events. Job is suffering; therefore Job has sinned; therefore they know what God is doing. That is what Luther called the theology of glory: reasoning upward from what can be seen to what God must intend (Heidelberg Disputation, theses 19-21). Thesis 21 fits the friends exactly: the theologian of glory calls evil good and good evil, while the theologian of the cross calls a thing what it is. The friends look at an innocent man's suffering and call it the proof of hidden sin.

Luther distinguished God hidden in His majesty from God clothed in His Word. The hidden God is not to be pried into; we have to do with God as He has revealed Himself in the Word (*Bondage of the Will,* LW 33:139-140). The Formula of Concord applies the same rule to the most frightening question a Christian can ask, whether he is among the elect. It

warns again and again against probing God's secret, hidden counsel and directs troubled consciences to the revealed Word, the preached gospel, and Christ, the Book of Life (FC SD XI.12-13, 26, 33, 52-55, 65-66, 70). That is Job 15:8 turned into pastoral care. Do not try to listen at the door of God's council. Listen where He has opened the door.

2. The external Word, not the whisper in the night

Eliphaz's own credential was a secret whisper (4:12-16). The Smalcald Articles call this kind of thing enthusiasm: the claim to have the Spirit apart from and before the external Word. Luther traces it all the way back to the serpent in Eden and insists that God gives His Spirit to no one except through or with the external Word that comes before (SA III.8.3-10). Eliphaz, sincere as he was, is an early enthusiast. He trusted a private voice over the God who speaks openly, and the private voice gave him a false gospel of works: suffer, and it proves your sin; repent, and you will prosper.

3. The office of preaching: those who stood in the council

Jeremiah 23 is the closest parallel to Job 15:8 in the whole Old Testament. The LORD asks which of the false prophets has stood in His *sôd* to see and hear His word (23:18), and answers that if they had, they would have proclaimed His words and turned the people from evil (23:22). Standing in the council is what makes a prophet. Proclaiming what was heard there is what a prophet does.

Amos 3:7 states the principle: the Lord GOD does nothing without revealing His *sôd* to His servants the prophets. The council is real and the counsel is hidden, but God does not keep it to Himself. He sends.

That is why Lutherans confess that God instituted the office of preaching, giving the gospel and the sacraments, through which as through means He gives the Holy Spirit (AC V). The pastor has not climbed into heaven. He has been sent to say what was spoken there. The congregation does not have to eavesdrop on God. God's counsel is read aloud to them on Sunday morning.

4. Friends brought into the council

Psalm 25:14 says the LORD confides in those who fear Him, and Proverbs 3:32 says His *sôd* is with the upright. Job 29:4 calls the same thing God's friendship over a tent. In the Old Testament, to be in someone's *sôd* is to be his intimate friend.

Jesus takes up exactly that language. He no longer calls His disciples servants, because a servant does not know what his master is doing. He calls them friends, because everything He heard from His Father He has made known to them (John 15:15). And Hebrews opens by saying that God, who spoke in many ways through the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son (Heb. 1:1-2).

Here is the gospel answer to Eliphaz's question. No, Job did not sit in God's council. Neither did Eliphaz, and neither do we. But the Son did. He is the Word who was with God in the beginning (John 1:1, 18), the only one who has seen the Father, and He came out of the council to make it known. What was decided there was not a verdict against us but a counsel of mercy: the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8; 1 Pet. 1:19-20). That counsel now comes to us in the means of grace: in the preached Word, in the water of Baptism, in the bread and the cup. Sinners do not get into God's council by their own wisdom. They are brought in, as friends, by the Son who sat there first.

Council and Counsel Together

So which is right, council or counsel? Both, and the Hebrew will not let us have one without the other. A *sôd* is a room where intimates speak freely and the words they speak there. You cannot hear the counsel without being admitted to the council, and being admitted to the council means hearing the counsel.

That is exactly why Eliphaz's taunt fails and the gospel succeeds. Eliphaz assumed the door was shut and that the wise could still work out what was said behind it. The book of Job shows that the door is shut to human wisdom, the wisdom of the friends included. The rest of Scripture shows that God opened it from the inside. He spoke through the prophets who stood in His council. He spoke last and fully through His Son, who sat in it from eternity. And He still speaks His counsel to sinners through the Word preached and the sacraments given, so that no one has to guess what God thinks of them.

The next time a Bible study notices two translations disagreeing over a word, it may not be a mistake on either side. It may be a window into a word that is bigger than our language. Job 15:8 is one of those.

Notes

Scripture quotations are from the Berean Standard Bible. Confessional citations follow the standard paragraph numbering used in the Kolb-Wengert *Book of Concord*: AC V; SA III.8.3-10; FC SD XI.12-13, 26, 33, 52-55, 65-66, 70. Luther, *Bondage of the Will*, LW 33:139-140; *Heidelberg Disputation*, theses 19-21 (LW 31:40-41) and their proofs (LW 31:52-53); *To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany* (LW 45:360).

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the Berean Standard Bible (BSB), dedicated to the public domain. Identified translation and textual-variant comparisons retain the readings discussed.