

The Bible and the Alphabet

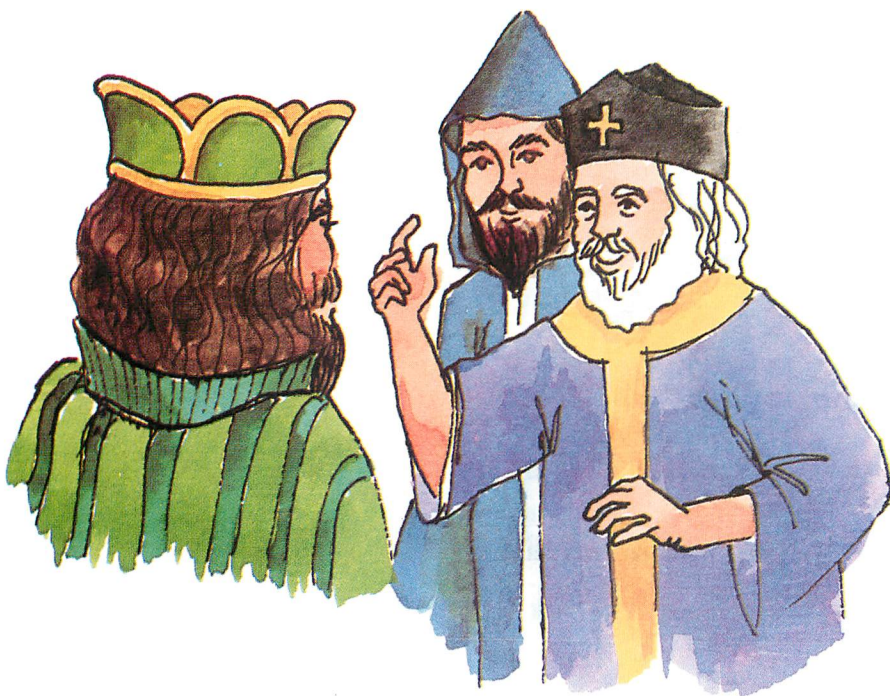
Use this chart to figure out the secret messages:

a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m
ա	պ	բ	ա	ի	ֆ	կ	հ	յ	ն	գ	լ	մ
n	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	w	x	y	z
ն	օ	փ	գի	ր	ս	դ	ը	վ	աւ	գա	ե	զ

1. կօտ յս լօվի.
2. ուի լիարն ապօրդ կօտ յն դիի պյպլի.
3. արմինյա ուսս դիի ֆյրսդ ֆիրյսդյան նադիօն.
4. ուի րիստ դիի պյպլի յն ֆհըրֆհ.

Note: Although Armenian alphabet letters are used in this code, they do not always represent the sound usually associated with them. The use of the Armenian letters simply provides a “code” and a chance for the children to experience the difficulty of knowing one language and not being able to read it.

Make up your own secret messages:



St. Mesrob and the Alphabet

“Mesrob,” said one of his helpers, “how can we teach these people about Jesus if we don’t have a Bible for them in their own language!”

“You are right. For a long time now I have been thinking that an alphabet must be created for the Armenian language. Then the Bible could be written in the language the people speak and understand. I

will go to Catholicos Sahag and discuss this matter with him. Perhaps we can find a way to solve this problem.”

Mesrob went to Vagharshapat to speak to his old friend and spiritual leader Catholicos Sahag.

“Yes, we must have a written language. Let us meet with King Vramshabouh and find a way to educate our people in their own language.” King Vramshabouh was delighted. “I will give you anything you need to create an Armenian alphabet and start educating the people in our own Armenian language. We cannot go on using Greek or Syriac for all our state papers and church services. We must put everything into the people’s language.”

Mesrob had been a secretary to King Vramshabouh and was very well educated. So were Catholicos Sahag and King Vramshabouh. But Mesrob wanted to learn more about languages and alphabets. Mesrob was sent to Greece and then traveled to other lands to learn.

“Lord,” Mesrob prayed, “guide me to make an alphabet so that I can teach my people about you.”

God answered Mesrob’s prayers and inspired him to create the Armenian alphabet. With the help of Sahag, the letters were improved and finalized — thirty-six letters, one for each sound. (Many years later two more letters were added.)

“Now we must teach teachers to use this alphabet,” said Mesrob.

“And they will go all over Armenia teaching boys and girls, men and women to read and write in their own language,” said Sahag.

Soon many people knew the alphabet well and they began the great task of translating the Bible. It took many years and much work. When they finished they went back over every word again and improved their Bible. Their translation was so good, that even today, it is called the “Queen of Translations.”

“Now we must write the badarak and other important books in Armenian. We can train new priests in their own language!” said Sahag.

“Yes,” said Mesrob, “there is still much to do. But we have done well. All over our kingdom there are now schools to teach our people the Good News. Thank God we have been able to do this.”