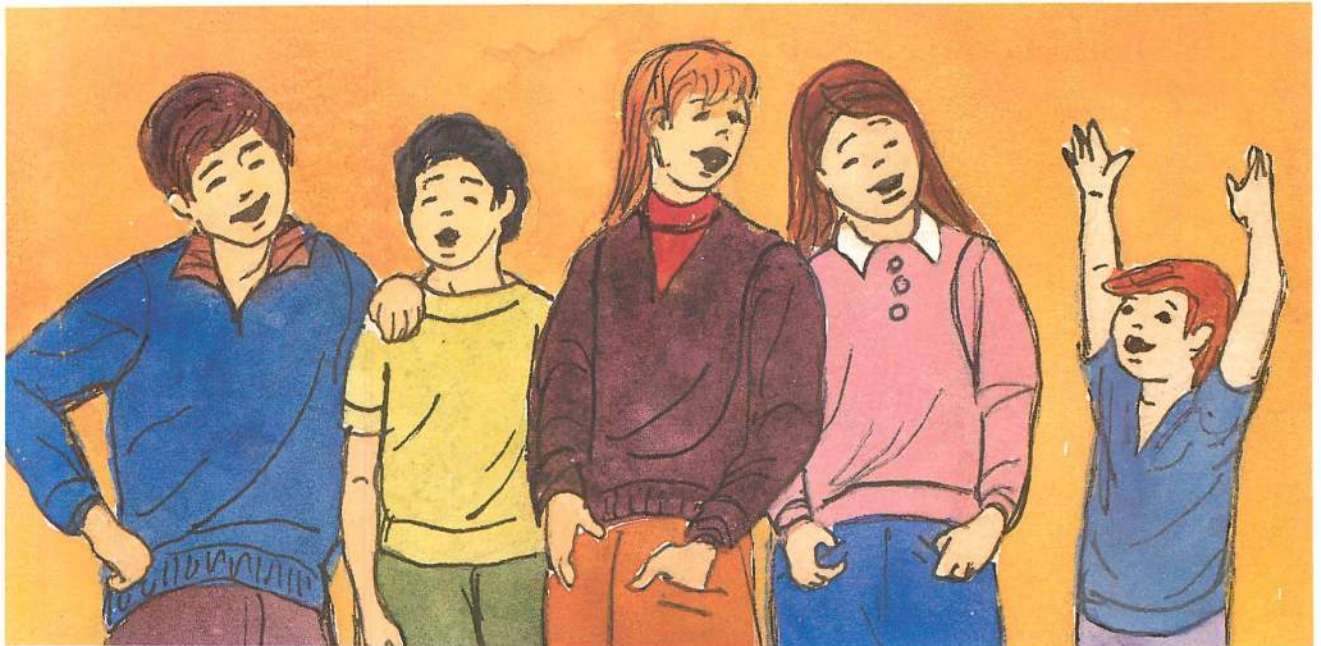


# St. Sahag and St. Mesrob



## Vork Zartaretseen



Vork zar - ta - re - tzeen d - no - ree - na - pa - - r

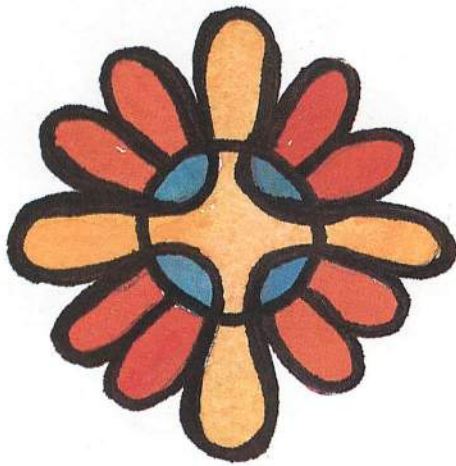


zee masdn a - - - ne - - - gheen, has da de lo - v her -

gree - - u - z kee - r gen - ta - - - nee ho vel uz ho - - d

nor Ees - ra - - - ye - - - lee. Ye - r kov khagh - tzoo - tya - n he - nch

ma - - mp z - Ast - va - dz orh - ne - - s zoo - k.







## St. Mesrob's Hope

The problem seemed hopeless, Mesrob and his students had searched everywhere, and they couldn't find all the letters they needed for an Armenian alphabet. What were they going to do? No one knew. But Mesrob kept thinking that they must always have hope. "If it's God's will, we'll find a way to write out Armenian words."

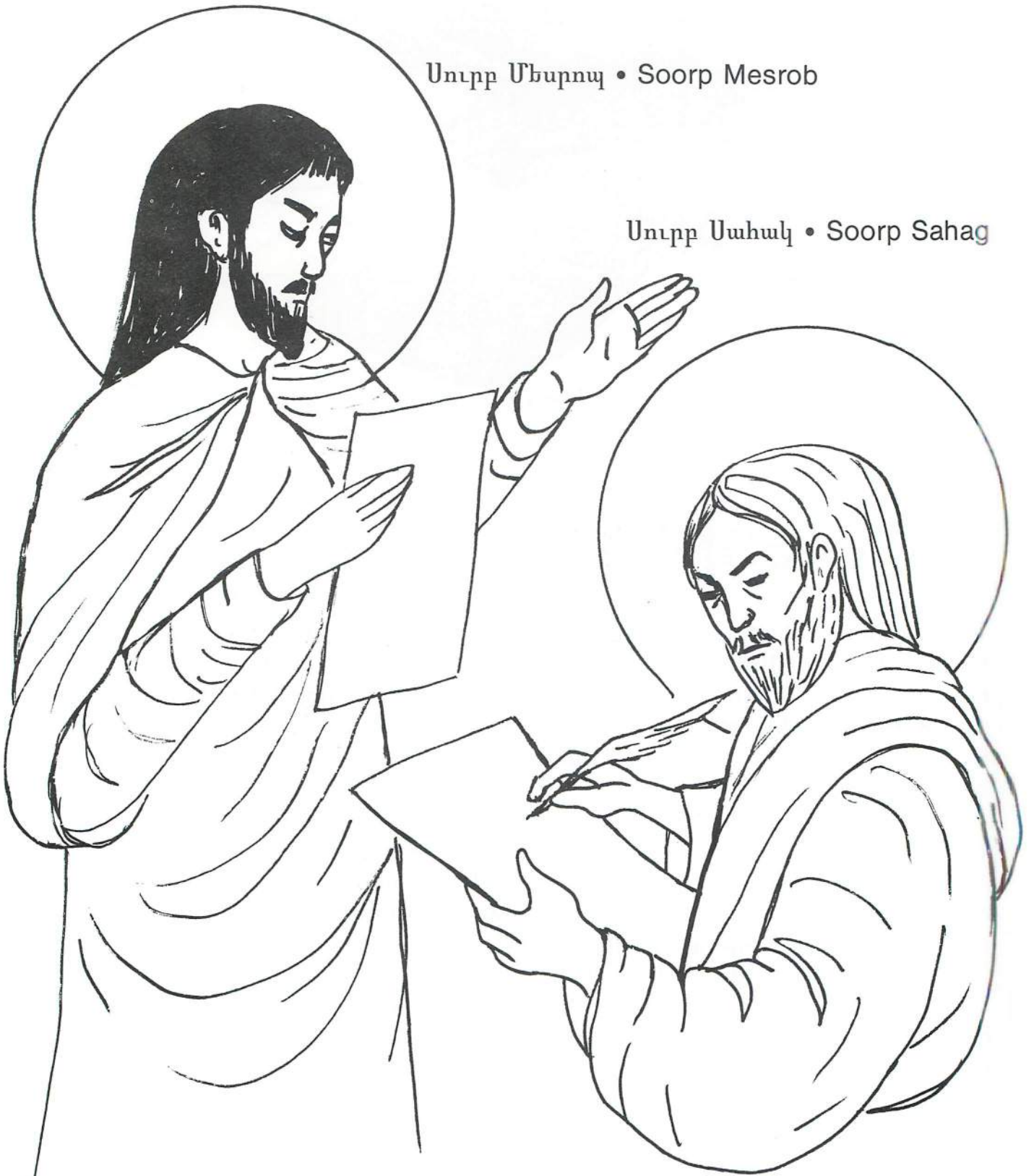
One day Mesrob fell asleep. He was dreaming about how wonderful it would be to have all the books of the Bible written in Armenian. All of a sudden, Mesrob saw a hand writing something on a rock. It was the letters, the letters they were looking for to complete an Armenian alphabet. Mesrob woke up and remembered what he dreamed. He said a prayer of thanks to God, and then he wrote out the first words ever written in the Armenian alphabet. The words come from the wise King Solomon: "To know wisdom and instruction, to perceive the words of understanding."

After that, all the great scholars and teachers in Armenia began translating the Bible.

To know wisdom and instruction, to perceive the words of understanding ...

Սուրբ Մեսրոպ • Soorp Mesrob

Սուրբ Սահակ • Soorp Sahag



Հանաչել գիմաստութիւն եւ զխրատ, իմանալ զբանս հանճարոյ . . .

Write your name in Armenian.





their parents, and one other person during the next several days, what kind of jobs Thaddeus, Bartholomew and Gregory would do if they were here today. (5 min.)

7. Dismiss with a prayer.

## Session 2—Isaiah

### Key Concepts

1. A prophet is a person who is sent by God to deliver a message.
2. Isaiah was such a prophet.

### Objectives

Students will

1. Read about Isaiah and his words.
2. Create an interpretive dance of Isaiah's celebratory words.

### Background for Teacher

Isaiah 6,12.

### Procedure

1. Welcome students. Opening prayer. Go over homework assignment. Remind students of what they learned last week about saints. Hang the poster that the students made and show them how saints are people who come from all walks of life. They differ from most people in that saints have God at the center of their lives. Having reminded the students of this, add the definition of a prophet. Use the illustrations on page 76 for discussion. Say: "A prophet is a person whom God chooses at special moments in time to give his people a message. Sometimes the prophet sings the message. A man named Isaiah sang some songs to let God's people know that they had nothing to worry about. Isaiah was telling them about the coming of Jesus. Sometimes a prophet had to work hard to get the attention of God's people to let them know that they had been living very sinful lives; people wouldn't listen to him otherwise. The prophet whom we will be learning about today was named Isaiah."

Pronounce the prophet's name several times. Then, let the students pronounce it first in English—Isaiah—then in Armenian—Yesayi. (20 min.)

2. Explain to the students that it's time to play a special game. The game is called pantomime. Pantomime means that the students will re-enact a kind of dance that shows what is happening in the story you are going to read. As you explain this to the students, be physical yourself. You might say to the students: "In pantomime you can't make noise; so, when I say, 'Give thanks to the Lord,' you have to do

something physically grateful like clasping your hands and holding them up to the Lord." (Show this by clasping hands, genuflecting, and thanking the Lord silently.)

When this is clear, it's time to begin. In a circle in the center of the room, the students can jump, dance, kneel, all according to how they want to interpret the passage you are about to read. Tell them you are going to do the pantomime twice. First, to get the knack of it; second, to do it just right! Read slowly and in rhythm with the students' response. Don't go to the next verse until all the students have done something. Encourage them. (The first verses here are the toughest to interpret physically; so don't get discouraged.) Using the student text, read "A Song of Thanksgiving." (20 min.)

3. After the students have settled down read the story of Isaiah's conversion on page 75.

Tell the students the story was meant to remind them that a prophet is a person chosen by God to give people his message. Say, too, that you have another reason—at every badarak, we recall this story when we sing, "Soorp, Soorp" (Holy, Holy). (15 min.)

4. Dismiss with a prayer. (5 min.)

## Session 3—Saint Sahag and Saint Mesrob

### Key Concepts

1. The Armenian alphabet was created by Sts. Sahag and Mesrob.
2. The invention of the alphabet made the translation of the Bible possible.

### Objectives

Students will

1. Sing "The Hymn of the Holy Translators" (Vork Zartaretzeen—Srpotz Tarkmanchatz).
2. Write their names, and St. Mesrob's first words, in Armenian letters.
3. Read about the story of the translation.

### Background for Teacher

Mesrob Mashdotz: A Fifth-Century Life.

### Materials Needed

- Pencils
- Index cards with each student's first name written in Armenian

### Procedure

1. Welcome students. Opening prayer. Teach the students "The Hymn of the Holy Translators." The best way to approach it is to sing it once straight



through and tell the students what it means. Then take it line by line. After you do the second line, go back and do lines one and two together. The same then for the third and finally the fourth. Repeat what the song means in English and then have the class sing it again. Vary it as well by letting one half of the class sing lines one and three while the other half sings two and four. The more times the full song is repeated in different ways the better the students will retain it. The secret is to let yourself and your students have fun with the singing. (15 min.)

2. Introduce the subject of Sahag and Mesrob by telling the students that the song they've just learned to sing is about the two men responsible for translating the Bible into Armenian. Relate the following and suggest that students look at the pictures in their text. (The story is a bit complicated, so we'll have to take it in two parts.) "Let's talk first about Mesrob, and the lack of an alphabet appropriate to the Armenian language—how the Greek letters didn't cover all the sounds used in the Armenian language, and how the Syrian letters had sounds that didn't even exist in the Armenian. Mesrob had to find the right alphabet. He got together a group of students and they went traveling on an adventure to find more letters to add to what they would take from the other alphabets. Well, try and try as they might, they couldn't come up with enough letters to cover all the Armenian sounds. When they thought they had done it, Mesrob all of a sudden would remember another Armenian word that needed a letter they didn't have and they would have to start searching all over again. It seemed hopeless, but Mesrob held out and put his faith in God. And God helped him through this crisis. Once, while day-dreaming, half asleep and half awake, Mesrob was thinking about all the books in the Bible and how wonderful it would be if they could be read by Armenians without their having to learn Greek. Wouldn't it be wonderful if the Bible could be translated into Armenian! But that's what hurt the most—there were nearly enough letters now, except for a few sounds which still had no letters.

Suddenly, a smooth rock appeared in front of Mesrob. A hand was writing something on the rock: the missing letters! There they were, the missing letters. Mesrob woke up, excited and grateful. He said a prayer of thanks, for now he had thirty-six letters for an Armenian alphabet: he could write any Armenian word he wanted. He took out his copy of the bible (written in Syriac) and translated the first words of the Wise King Solomon: 'To know wisdom and instruction, to perceive the words of understanding.' Look at the words in Armenian." (See pages 80-81.)

Ask the students if anyone can see if there's a special meaning in these words? "Doesn't having the Bible in Armenian give all Armenians the chance to know wisdom and instruction? Doesn't it give them

the chance to hear the words of understanding?" (10 min.)

3. During the next twenty minutes, ask students to copy the letters in their textbooks so that they will have written out Mesrob's first Armenian words. While they are doing this, distribute an index card to each student on which you have written their first name in Armenian. Have them copy their names as well on page 81. (Of course, with non-Armenian names this can't be exactly accurate, but do a transliteration of the names.) (20 min.)

4. Ask the students to imagine a world that had books only in languages they did not know and could not read. Ask them how they would find out information if all the books and even television were in languages they didn't know? Tell them it was worse in Sahag's time because the most important book was in a language foreign to the Armenians. Say: "Only very learned men could read it. And when they read it out loud they would have to stop and translate for the people who didn't understand Greek or Syriac. They couldn't even write out these translations because there was no way to write the Armenian language until Mesrob invented a way. So every translation of the same passage was different. Religious chaos could have resulted! But it didn't.

"It was Catholicos Sahag, who led the Armenians in the translating of the Bible into written Armenian. A lot of serious difficulties had to be overcome in order to do this. Can you guess what they were?" (Let the students develop answers such as the initial need to teach the Armenian alphabet as well as to give translators ability to read Greek and Syriac.) "All this had to be accomplished by establishing several schools, and getting books. Sahag did all this because he had a vision from God."

Tell the students that Sahag knew that he had to do everything he could to help the Armenians keep their Christian faith. One way to do that was to tie the faith into one of God's greatest gifts, language. (10 min.)

5. *Homework Assignment:* Ask students to teach someone at home the hymn of the Holy Translators. Before class ends, remind them of the song by having the whole class sing it once again. Also, have them read *St. Mesrob's Hope* in their textbooks with their parents. (5 min.)

6. Prayer and dismissal.

## Session 4—King Drtad and St. Gregory

### Key Concepts

1. St. Gregory converted King Drtad to Christianity.