



### The Fall of the Yers - Solutions

-Solutions by Morris Alper, problem by Anand Natarajan

The Slavic languages are a family of languages spoken in Central and Eastern Europe, and form a branch of the Indo-European family. Below are some words in two modern Slavic languages, as well as in Old Church Slavonic – the oldest recorded Slavic language. The symbols ъ and ь are taken from the Cyrillic alphabet and represent unique sounds in Old Church Slavonic. The symbols oN and ě represent specific OCS vowels (like “on” in French “ton” and like “a” in English “hat,” respectively).

OCS	Bulgarian	Russian	English meaning
дѣнь	den	den'	day
градѣ	grad	gorod	city
дѣждѣ	dăžd	dožd'	rain
boNdoN	băda	budu	I am / I will be
igrajoN	igraja	igraju	I play
дѣньсѣ	dnes	dnes'	today / nowadays
сѣнь	săn	son	sleep
дѣни	dni	dni	days
poNть	păt	put'	path
oNgьль	ăgăl	ugol	corner
bělъ	bjal	bel	white
obědъ	objad	obed	lunch
mrazъ	mraz	moroz	frost
nesoN	(do)nesa	nesu	I carry
kostъ	kost	kost'	bone

**Assignment 1:** Fill in the following table.

OCS	Bulgarian	Russian	English meaning
beroN	bera	beru	I gather / I take
kralъ	kral	korol'	king
krъvъ	krăv	krov'	blood
zoNbъ	zăb	zub	tooth



# World Language Club

**Assignment 2:** In modern Russian, which is written in Cyrillic, the symbols ъ and ь are silent, though they affect the pronunciation of the previous consonants. However, linguists think that these letters were not silent in Old Church Slavonic. What kinds of sounds do you think these consonants represented (consonants or vowels)?

*These were probably vowels:*

*Firstly, a word like "дѣньсѣ" would be difficult to pronounce without vowels, though syllabic consonant nuclei are possible.*

*Secondly, they have shifted into vowels in some positions in Bulgarian and Russian, and never independent consonants. The only non-vowel reflex of these sounds is the palatalization in Russian (represented by an apostrophe), and even this is easily explainable if /ь/ was at some point a front vowel.*

*Finally, their ellipsis word-finally is consistent with the behavior of vowels, while it is less common diachronically for consonants.*