

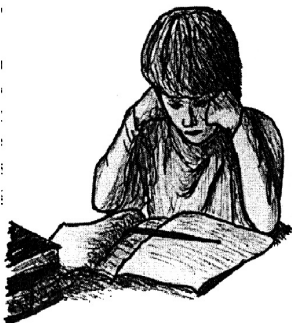
write and keep accounts. I believed him and made him responsible for my business. Now that I have opened my books, I find the accounts are not correct. It is not clear how much we owe and how much others owe to us. However, it is clear that I am nearly bankrupt."

The sheikh replied: "God is showing you that often the good things of this world are for the foolish, and its difficulties are for the wise. If you think well over the matter, you will see that you are wrong in your account to God, just as the boy is wrong in his account to you. Also, you do not know today how things will stand on the Day of Judgment, whether there is gain or loss. Stop scolding the boy and scold yourself, or you may be saying too much."

While the sheikh was speaking, everyone was listening carefully to him. Then someone said to him: "You are right, worthy sheikh. Now explain your words to us, for we find them hard to understand."

The sheikh said: "I will tell you a story with a beautiful meaning." He sat down beside the shop and began to speak to the crowd.

"Many years ago," he said, "there was a man who, when he was alone one day, began to count the years of his age. He found that he was sixty years old. He counted the days and found that they were more than 21,000. Then he said to himself: Oh wicked one that I am! Were I to commit only one sin a day, my sins would amount to a terri-



ble number. How can I meet my Lord with this great number of failure and sins! Ashamed, he fell on the ground and said: What will then happen to me if I even sin many times in one day? And how evil must my heart be that I can sin so freely! He became very sad at the thought of his evil heart and this terrible account. He remained lying on the ground, tired by fear and sorrow."

When the sheikh had finished his strange story, all his hearers thought of themselves and their evil deeds, and what they should do when their many sins were added up. One of them answered: "But we have done good works which make up for our sins." The sheikh replied to him: "Sir, beware of trusting in your good works; allow me to tell you what happened to me when I thought of my good works."

"One day," he continued, "I wished to count up what I could remember of my faults and my good deeds. Finally, I found that the faults were many times more than the good deeds, and I became faint and slept. Then I had an awful dream. In my dream I was sitting in my home and a book was opened before me. It was my account book, and I saw my sins on the debit side and began to count them, but they were too many for me to count. On the credit page were my good works. These were very few, and over them some terrible words were written: 'All our righteous acts are as filthy rags.' As I considered this, I began to weep in my dream and



woke up weeping."

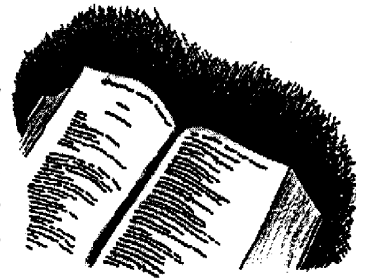
Then the sheikh said: "Oh my friends, the dream which I had was a true one. It was one of God's prophets, Isaiah, who spoke these words. It is right for all of us to fear, for our good works could be found lacking and not acceptable on the Day of Judgment. But this prophet, who described our good works, did not stop there. In his book he spoke of a great Saviour whom God would send to save the people from their sins. He would wipe from their eyes the tears of sorrow and repentance."

At this the grocer cried: "May God have mercy on your parents! Tell us what the prophet said about the Saviour." The sheikh answered, "Listen to what the prophet said: He was pierced for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed. He poured out His life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

The grocer said: "My mind is not clever enough to understand these words, but they are sweeter than honeycomb. I beg you to tell me who that Saviour is who poured out His soul unto death because of our sin."

"My dear brother," said the sheikh, "come with me to my house, and I shall explain the matter to you in detail from the Book of God."

The grocer said to the boy, whom he



Then he went with the sheikh. When they arrived at his house, the sheikh began to read to him from the books of the prophets and the Psalms (Arabic *Zabur*) of King David (Arabic *Da'ud*) the prophet. They read the prophecies concerning the Saviour. Then he showed him the Injil of Jesus, showing how these prophecies were fulfilled exactly in the person of Jesus the Messiah. They both marveled at God's great love and rejoiced in the wonderful way of salvation.

Friend, like all of us, you should think how evil your heart is and how many your sins are. Count their number and do not dare to think that they are few, or you will deceive yourself. David, the prophet, a man who loved God and his commandments, counted up his sins. He found that they were many and said: "I am drowning in the flood of my sins; they are a burden too heavy to bear." Do not think that those of your sins that are hidden from men are hidden from God, for nothing is hidden from Him. Listen to what David said about this: "You know my folly (sinful acts), oh God; the guilt is not hidden from you." Examine yourself and come to God with repentance. Consider these divine words with all your heart and mind. Seek God's salvation, the Saviour, the Lord Jesus the Messiah. He gave Himself unto death for your sins and rose from the dead so that you, too, might live with Him forever.

To learn more about Jesus the Messiah and the Holy Bible, we are ready to send you a booklet free of charge: THE MESSAGE. Please write your name and address clearly and send your request to:

Bankrupt means to be without money or resources to pay debts.

Bookkeeping is the art or practice of keeping financial records

David (Arabic, *Da'ud*) is the most famous king of Israel.

Debit is an item of debt recorded in an account; the opposite of credit.

Divine is that which belongs to God; also, a quality or characteristic of God.

Injil (Evangel) is the Arabic term for the Book of Jesus, the New Testament writings in the Holy Bible.

Messiah (Arabic *al-Masih*) is a Hebrew word meaning "the anointed one of God." He was anointed to be the Saviour of all mankind. The Greek word for Messiah is "Christ."

Scold is to find fault using harsh words; to strongly criticize, abuse or punish with words.

Sheikh is an Arabic word for an elder, head of an Arab tribe or family. It is a title of honour and respect.

Zabur is the Arabic word for the book of the Psalms of David (Arabic *Da'ud*) in the Holy Bible.

¹ Isaiah 64:6

⁴ Isaiah 53:5

⁷ Psalms 69:5

² Isaiah 53:1-12

⁵ Isaiah 53:12

³ Isaiah 25:8-9

⁶ Psalms 38:4

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The storyteller



The Wisdom of a Sheikh A Parable

Just seeing him walking through the market, no one thought the old sheikh was so wise. He stopped in front of a grocer's shop. The grocer was scolding a boy who had been hired to do his bookkeeping. His voice was so loud that soon a crowd gathered round them. Then the sheikh, a good and wise man, said to the grocer: "My friend, why are you so angry with this boy? Have mercy on him, for mercy is the mark of generous people." The grocer said: "Sir, this boy has done me a most serious injury. When I hired him he assured me that he knew how to