

These are some of the lessons and memories that I like to share with my dear readers. For me, the greatest lesson I've learned over life's journey is that man must thank God and be in a perpetual state of gratitude for what he has been given. True happiness and prosperity can only be found in giving praise to God and they cannot be tasted without sipping from the cup of spiritual conviction, even in the hardships which truly do shape men.

On this journey, I have been blessed with the company of many dear and peaceful friends; my books. From the moment I mastered reading, books never left my side until the day I traveled abroad to study in the United States. I had to leave behind our library of more than 300 books which had been collected over so many years. In addition to my own collection of comic books, our library ranged from the works of Taha Hussein, Yusef Al Sibai, and Ihsan Abdul Qoddous; to some beautiful translations of *The Bread Peddler* by Xavier de Montépin, *Gone With the Wind* by Margaret Mitchell, and *The Lost Horizon* by James Hilton. I also treasured a collection of Islamic books which I had inherited from my father. Unfortunately, upon my return from abroad, I discovered that I had lost that library as people had lost the wisdom of owning books. Only a few of the more collectable volumes had survived the purge. I kept what little remained for myself and I still hold in my heart a deep sorrow for so great a loss.

Throughout my career books have remained my constant companions, though their subjects took different forms. My work in the oil sector compelled me to read all I could about that field. The same happened when I entered the banking sector, which required studying the principles of accounting. In the late eighties, when the