

driver would give our father a full report on which of his children were late getting to school or returning home, and which of his children had skipped school that day. This way, after finding the reason for our absence, our father would know exactly whom to punish. One always reaps what one sows, and the punishment varied according to one's misdeed; from scolding, to pulling the ears, to a lashing on the feet. Although my father had so many children, in addition to being overwhelmed with so many business concerns, his keen perception and enormous ability to stay updated on each of his children's affairs leaves me speechless even now. For as much as he was strict, he was also a tender, compassionate, and kind-hearted man. I remember one time when he saw me at home on a school day. Without even asking why I was still at home, he punished me for skipping school. Doubting whether or not he had been unjustly harsh towards one of his children, he wasn't able to move on with his day. He came back home to see me and find out the reason I wasn't in school. When he learned that I was sick, he gave me a generous allowance. My father was a remarkable man of remarkable values and character, and I regret that I did not have the chance to know him better in life. Still, I have come to know him better through his poems, accounts, and records which I have maintained over the years.

I still wonder why, unlike my younger siblings, I was never enrolled in kindergarten. I clearly remember how in elementary school I struggled in my Arabic classes. Although I excelled at math, reading and writing was always so difficult for me. I spent six years in elementary school, and in spite of all my mother's desperate attempts, by my third year I was still unable to read or write. During the last year of school before my father passed away, there was one incident that influenced me