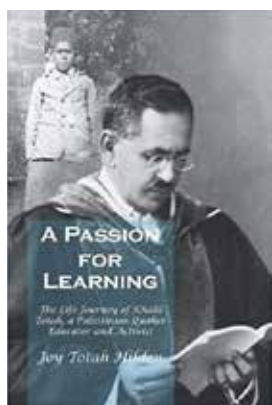


## A Passion for Learning

The Life Journey of Khalil Totah,  
a Palestinian Quaker Educator and Activist

By Joy Totah Hilden

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An unwavering advocate with a mystical vision and a yearning for answers, he self-addressed every diligent inquiry with a subsequent one, digging deeper in his quest for learning. From the Ottoman Empire to the British Mandate to the rapid foundation of the state of Israel, this Palestinian's journey steadfastly mirrored the raging violence that all Palestinians endured as they fought for sovereignty over their land and independence over their nation. In his quest for profound knowledge, he left his rustic Christian town of Ramallah, Palestine, in 1906, to return only years later in hope of unpacking inquiries etched into the history of the occupation and the Arab union. Khalil Abdallah Totah was an inquirer, an educator, and once a little boy with a heartfelt wish to "be a man, independent and free," to receive an education and "to rise up and be somebody." Is a plea for education and independence too much to ask?

Buried under mountainous piles of documents, diaries, interviews, manuscripts, and letters, Joy Totah Hilden (Khalil's daughter) skillfully transforms these anecdotal records into an unfeigned account of her father as an activist, lifelong learner, and educator. She goes on to further shed light on the historical presence of Quakers in Palestine, the educational history of Palestine, and her father's persistence as he strove to balance his religious beliefs and his commitment to serve his country. The author's biography of her father might have been an opportunity for her to grieve

this tragic loss, but by unveiling his selfless devotion to education, she has brought closure to the lives of many Palestinians, most of whom are gathered in the auditorium of the Ramallah Friends School.

Khalil Totah's devotion to educating Palestinian youth and educating Americans about Palestine was his call for resistance and embodiment of a humanitarian "mission" as unveiled by his wife, who exclaimed that, "the call of God, which came to him in his youth, to serve the people of his native land, was thus, not a chore but a joy and his life's consuming passion." This diligent portrayal of his selfless service as the principal of a teacher-training college in Jerusalem and later as principal of the Friends Boys School in Ramallah (now known as Ramallah Friends School), speaks volumes these days, particularly to our youth. The author manifests this account with vivid descriptive language to unpack the epidemic of violence and Khalil Totah's passion to tackle every barrier with an inquiry and opportunity to seek the funds of knowledge in our community and our world. Joy has reminded every student, learner, educator, and every oppressed soul of the desire that "I, too, want to receive an education, to be free, and rise up and be somebody."