Abraham Kaufman

(8)

1861-1863

Abraham Kaufman was the eighth President of Keneseth Israel, notably serving during the first years of the American Civil War. His tenure was marked by his recruitment of Rabbi David Einhorn, one of the leading Reform rabbis in the world and one of the most prominent advocates of radical reform Judaism. Rabbi Einhorn had been ousted from his congregation in Baltimore because he was an outspoken abolitionist and found refuge in this Philadelphia congregation. In 1862, under Kaufman’s leadership, Keneseth Israel sponsored the writing of a hymnal by Einhorn that was subsequently used at Reform congregations across the country.

Kaufman was born in Bavaria, Germany on March 15, 1819, and came to Philadelphia as a young man. He was married to Babette Kaufman, who was born on December 21, 1830, and together they had five children. Kaufman was a founder of Keneseth Israel and, in addition to serving one term as president, was an honorary vice president at the time of his death. He worked as a manufacturer of women’s suits until his retirement at the age of 80. Additionally, he was one of the most active officers of the Orphans’ Guardian Association and a prominent member of B’nai B’rith, among other Jewish organizations. At the time of his death, he lived at 2024 North Thirteenth Street in Philadelphia. He died on February 28, 1904, and is buried alongside his wife at Mt. Sinai Cemetery in Philadelphia.