Alfred Klein

(16)

1903-1922

Alfred Klein served as President of Keneseth Israel for nearly two decades. During his tenure, Keneseth Israel continued to grow and become an influential congregation in the Reform movement. In 1904, under Klein’s leadership, Keneseth Israel helped establish a new Reform synagogue for recent immigrants in South Philadelphia. In 1908, in partnership with Rodeph Shalom, Keneseth Israel hosted the convention of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. When Rabbi Krauskopf was granted leave to travel and fundraise for Hebrew Union College, the Central Conference of American Rabbis, and the creation of new Reform congregations, Klein brought in two assistant rabbis, Henry M. Fisher and Eli Mayer, to assist with religious life at the synagogue. In 1906, with Rabbi Krauskopf back at Keneseth Israel, Rabbi Isaac Landman was hired as the new assistant rabbi. Together, they developed a Torah-focused religious school curriculum. In 1912, the Sisterhood was founded, and the congregation had reached a membership in excess of 1,100. With such large numbers, the Alumni Society raised the funds to build a new building for the school south of the synagogue. Classes began in the new building in the fall of 1914. This period also featured rapid growth of the library, which, by 1916, contained 7,500 volumes and had to be moved out of the Broad Street Temple and into the Alumni Building. In 1916, Rabbi Landman accepted his own pulpit and was succeeded as assistant rabbi by Rabbi James Heller. When the United States entered World War I, Keneseth Israel adopted a program of War Service that included conspicuous placement of names of members serving in the armed forces, corresponding with them, opening the Chapel for private prayers, and offering the Alumni Building for recreation for members of the armed forces. Rabbi Heller soon took his own pulpit, and Rabbi Abraham Feldman was hired as assistant rabbi in 1920. In 1922, the congregation’s bylaws were amended to allow all seat holders to become members and to allow two women to serve on the Board.

Alfred Klein was born on May 31, 1859 in Philadelphia. He was the son of former Keneseth Israel President David Klein. He had at least one sibling, a sister named Rosa, and was married to Clara P. Klein, also of Philadelphia. In addition to serving as President of Keneseth Israel for many years, Klein held a leadership position in the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. He may have worked in uniform manufacturing. Klein resided for some time at 1521 Jefferson Street, in Philadelphia. His residence at the time of his death was 1530 Locust Street. Klein died on July 22, 1940 and is buried at Mount Sinai Cemetery.