

# Our Beloved Friend and Board Member, Richard Rubenstein, has Died



**Dr. Richard Lowell Rubenstein**, age 97, of Fairfield, Connecticut, passed away on May 16, 2021 at Bridgeport Hospital in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Dr. Rubenstein was born in New York, NY, and was the son of Jesse George Rubenstein and Sara Fine Rubenstein.

Dr. Rubenstein was married for many happy years to his beloved wife, Betty Rogers Rubenstein, who predeceased him. Dr. Rubenstein had three beloved children and three beloved stepchildren. His son Isaac Aaron Rubenstein of Nassau, Bahamas was married to Carol Bulloch Rubenstein, both of whom predeceased Dr. Rubenstein. Dr. Rubenstein has two surviving children, Hannah R. Rubenstein (Feibel) of West Simsbury, CT

who is married to Frederick C. Feibel, and Jeremy N. Rubenstein of Los Angeles, CA who is married to Linda Tang Rubenstein. His stepchildren are John H. Alschuler of Sag Harbor, NY who is married to Diana Diamond, Jean Reed of Knowlesville, NB, Canada, and Liora Alschuler of East Thetford, VT.

Dr. Rubenstein was a devoted grandfather to Nicole Anne Rubenstein of Manchester, GA, Samuel J. Feibel of West Simsbury, CT, Hallie R. Feibel of New York, NY, Nicholas S. Rubenstein of Washington, DC, and Katherine E. Rubenstein, of Los Angeles, CA. He also was a devoted step-grandfather to Julia Alschuler Goodman of Washington, DC who is married to Justin Goodman and has a daughter Rose Alschuler Goodman, Catherine O'Mordha of Folsom, CA who is married to Michael O'Mordha and has a son Jacob O'Mordha, Karen Thurston of Plymouth, MA who has daughters Carmen Thurston and Devon Thurston, Susan Reed of Rockville, MD who has a son Levi Reed, and Derek Reed of Mechanicsville, VA who is married to Sulu Rose Reed and has a daughter Addison Reed and a son Lucas Reed.

Dr. Rubenstein was a rabbi, theologian, college professor and university president who was known for his towering work to address the meaning of modern Jewish life in the aftermath of the Holocaust. Born in New York City before the Great Depression to a largely secular family, his devotion to a life of intense intellectual searching, analysis and honesty took form at an early age. He attended the prestigious Townsend Harris High School, and after a brief flirtation with Unitarianism determined that fidelity to his self and his history required a return to Judaism.

Dr. Rubenstein attended the Hebrew Union College to study for the rabbinate while also attending the University of Cincinnati, where he met his first wife and the mother of his children, Ellen van der Veen. Becoming disillusioned with his ability to reconcile the horror of the Holocaust with the then

current thinking of Reform Judaism, he tried to enlist in the army but was rejected due to a medical condition. He decided to attend the Jewish Theological Seminary when his teacher Abraham Joshua Heschel went there after leaving the Hebrew Union College. Dr. Rubenstein was ordained and received his Master of Hebrew Letters from the Seminary. He then studied at Harvard Divinity School where he received his Master of Theological Studies and Ph.D. in the history of religion, while also serving as interim director of Hillel at Harvard and as a rabbi for two local congregations.

After leaving Harvard, Dr. Rubenstein served as the Hillel director and the Charles E. Merrill Professor of Humanities at the University of Pittsburgh, and then as the Robert O. Lawton Distinguished Professor of Religion and co-director of the Humanities Institute at Florida State University. After leaving Florida State University, Dr. Rubenstein became the president of the University of Bridgeport.

Dr. Rubenstein has received numerous awards and recognitions in his lifetime, including the Degree of Doctor of Hebrew Letters, honoris causa, from the Jewish Theological Seminary. He has written and co-written many books and scholarly articles, including the seminal and groundbreaking *After Auschwitz* which blazed the trail for understanding the meaning of God, man, history, and religion in the aftermath of the Holocaust.

A graveside service will take place on Wednesday, May 19, 2021 at 1:00 pm at Beth El Cemetery, 250 Reid St, Fairfield CT 06824. A link to view a live stream of the service is available at [www.greensfuneralhome.com](http://www.greensfuneralhome.com). Shiva will be observed at Dr. Rubenstein's home, 318 Collingwood Avenue, Fairfield, CT 06825 at 3:00 to 5:00 pm after the service. Memorial contributions may be made to Congregation Beth El, 1200 Fairfield Woods Rd, Fairfield, CT 06824.