

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion-The Rabbinical school and academic institution for the American Reform movement.

The Jewish Institute of Religion (JIR) was founded in New York by Stephen S. Wise in 1922. Wise objected to the anti-Zionist approach of the Hebrew Union College (HUC) in Cincinnati, and wanted a school where he could train rabbis to serve Klal Israel, all of the Jewish people. A number of prominent European scholars taught there, including Ismar Elbogen and Felix Perles, who came on a visiting or part-time basis. A number of top scholars, such as Harry Wolfson, Salo Baron, Julian Obermann, and Shalom Spiegel taught at the JIR full-time for a period of time before moving on to more prestigious institutions. Many of the graduating rabbis took New York area Reform and Conservative pulpits, and rabbis and scholars from across the country would come to visit. In 1950, the two institutions were merged to form HUC-JIR. By the late 1940s, Wise had become too ill to continue to perform all of the duties necessary to keep the institution vibrant. Further, the ideological differences between JIR and HUC had diminished with the passing of time. In 1954, HUC-JIR added a third center in Los Angeles, and in 1963, a fourth in Jerusalem. The Brookdale Center is located on W 4th Street in Greenwich Village, next to New York University (NYU). The Center includes the Minnie Petrie Synagogue, which displays Israeli Artist Yaacov Agam's stained glass windows of the 12 tribes. The Klau Library has over 130,000 volumes of Hebrew literature, Jewish history and thought, and Jewish music, in addition to recordings, musical arrangements, and microfilm documents.

Because of its proximity to NYU, HUC-JIR has been able to offer joint courses and cosponsor conferences with the Skirball Department of Hebrew and Judaic Studies. The New York campus houses the School of Sacred Music, which is the main professional program for the training of Reform cantors. Rabbinical and cantorial students work part-time in New York area Reform synagogues, as well as at congregations throughout the United States.