

FDR and The Jews by Richard Breitman and Allan J. Lichtman.
The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013.

For many American Jews of the 1920s and 30s, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt was an almost messianic figure who enjoyed their visceral and practical support. Yet there has always been a cloud over his legacy associated with his failure to allow significantly enhanced Jewish immigration from Europe as the Nazi grip on Europe tightened, and later his apparent refusal to allow the bombing of train lines to Auschwitz.

In *FDR and the Jews*, Distinguished Professors Breitman and Lichtman, of American University bring together the latest available scholarship on the subject to present a fascinating, more balanced and nuanced perspective on the subject.

The book is divided into 16 chapters, followed by an Afterword, covering every aspect of Roosevelt's presidencies with regard to the Jews: it is a complex jigsaw of competing pieces, not the least of which was FDR's consummate political nous which demanded of him that he make decisions about Jewish immigration against the backdrop of what was happening socially and economically, what would work in America and what might happen if he failed to get his decisions right.

As Breitman and Lichtman convincingly show, FDR was not indifferent to Jewish suffering but was constrained by political considerations from doing everything asked of him.

The result of his political pragmatism was the loss of many European Jewish lives that might have been saved, but *FDR and the Jews* still goes a considerable way towards explaining his actions and improving our perspectives on one of the towering figures of the first half of the 20th century.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh