

Livia bitton-jackson's i  
have lived a thousand  
years – a firsthand  
account of the...

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I Have Lived a Thousand Years is not historical fiction as some may believe, but the harrowing first-hand account of the horrors and suffering experienced by Livia Bitton-Jackson, born Elli Friedman, during the Nazi era. The book is written in first person, in the form of journal entries, immersing you into the life of 13-year-old Elli and her family, as her secure childhood is suddenly ended by the Nazis invading her homeland and their hatred towards the Jewish. Following a period of humiliation and deprivation, the Nazis forcibly removed Jewish families from their homes, including Elli's, and moved them to a horribly overcrowded ghetto before transferring them to the death camps at Auschwitz and Krakow.

Battered and weak, the poor people were stripped not only of their clothes and hair, but, most importantly, their dignity, and forced to live in such unimaginably inhumane conditions that are painful to even describe, let alone experience. The sick, the weak and all those considered by the SS as no longer serving any use to the state were mercilessly killed in gas chambers, while the elderly people and little children were often put to death right on arrival. Under these conditions, it was only through her strength, courage, trust in friends, love for her family and, at times, even luck, that young Elli managed to keep her will to survive and ultimately live to see the end of the atrocities. However graphic and brutal the novel is in parts, Bitton has managed to write her accounts in a positive and compassionate tone overall, perfectly illustrating how strong human character can be in times of adversity. Separated by her father and brother, Bubi, Elli vividly describes her ghastly days trying to survive as she and her mom are transferred to numerous concentration camps. Powerful words illustrate her worries of

getting to live another day, getting used to eating a mysterious slop as there was nothing else for food, struggling to lift a shovel and work hard to avoid the gas chamber, escaping death by sheer luck (Dr.

Mengele liked her golden hair), trying to keep her mother alive, and forcing herself to believe she will be free again. In the end, liberation does come thanks to the Allied Forces, and Elli and her mother journey to America, giving you a sense of hope and optimism, although still scarred by the atrocities and the anguish so powerfully described by the girl who has lived a thousand years. Although her spirit remained strong and she has managed to survive through all the horror, Elli's body was so transformed at the time she was freed that a German civilian mistook her for a sixty year old lady - a heart-crushing image that will stay with you long after putting the novel down. *I Have Lived a Thousand Years* is a book that drags you to hell along with the protagonist through vivid imagery and frank, straightforward wording, and then pulls you up again, showing you how survival is possible through perseverance, courage, ingenuity, and hope.