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THE TWIN JEWISH BELLY DANCERS WHO TOOK CAIRO, AND THE WORLD, BY STORM

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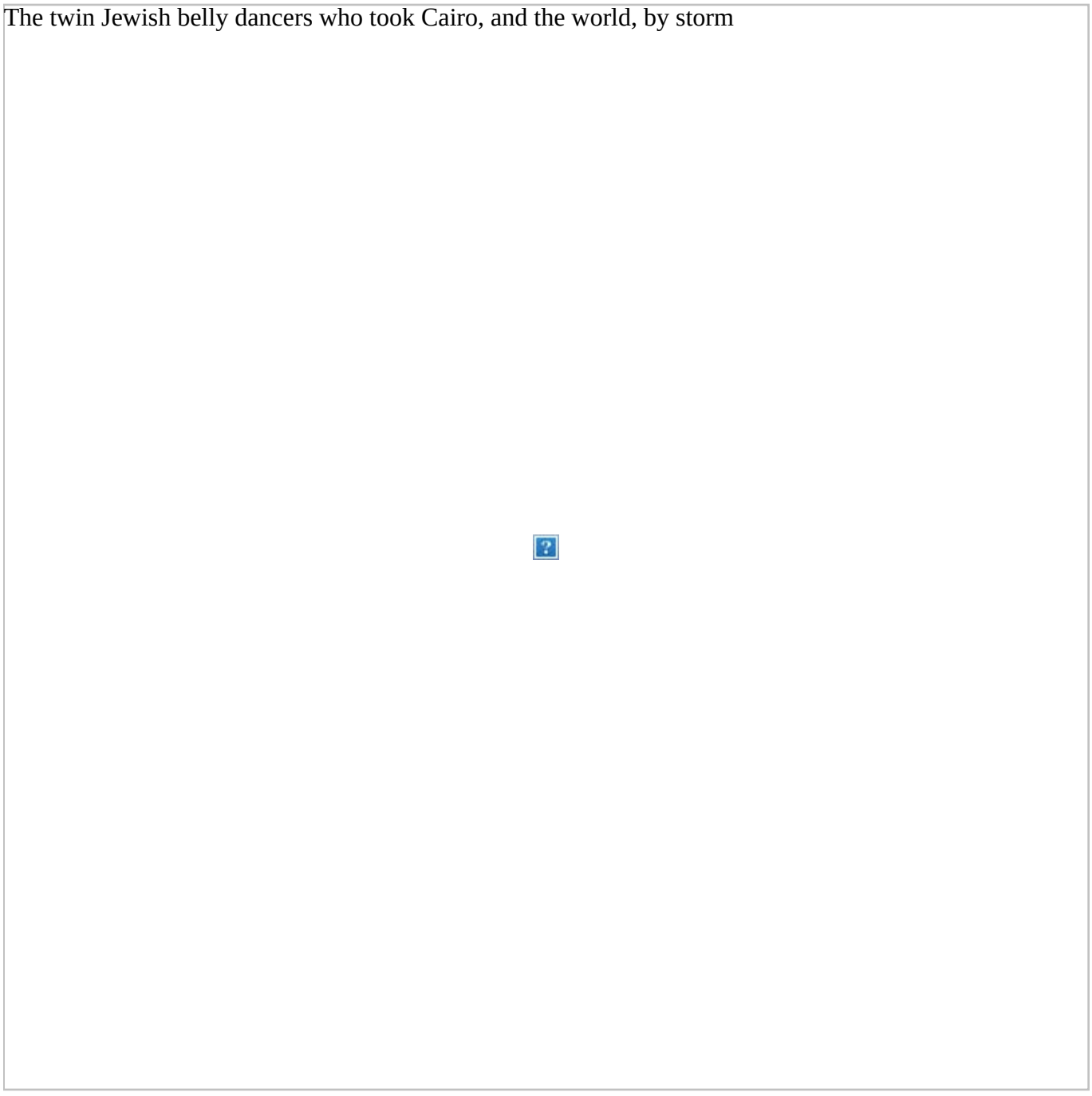
By

Very few people knew that the talented Jamal sisters were, in reality, Helena and Bertha Fishel.

BY HAGAY HACOHEN / JULY 11, 2018 21:56

1 minute read.

The twin Jewish belly dancers who took Cairo, and the world, by storm



The Jamal sisters (Helena and Bertha Fishel). (photo credit: NATIONAL LIBRARY OF ISRAEL)

Egypt once boasted a lively and fairly open society in which Muslims co-existed with Italian and Greek Christians, as well as the ancient community of the Copts and Jews.

However, despite that it was not publicly known that the Jamal twins, adored by King Farouk himself, were daughters of Jewish musicians Fishel and Jini Alpert. Fishel, who was originally from Chernowitz (now in the Ukraine) arrived to Egypt in the 1920's and secured work in an orchestra, and Jini was an opera singer.

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They sent their daughters to music and dance teachers from a young age and it was revealed the twins had an amazing talent for oriental dancing. Offers to perform in public soon followed, and, out of concern for her daughters, Jini decided to attend each concert they performed in - a decision she followed even years later when her young girls were adult women.

One of the Jamal sisters (Helena or Bertha Fishel) / NATIONAL LIBRARY OF ISRAEL

The twins re-named themselves Lelia and Lamia and practiced their routines, which were considered daring in the post WW2 years, for many hours. They became movie starts at home in Egypt but, after the military coup led by Nassar, moved to India and Singapore where their fame followed them.

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Lys and Lyn Gamal (1954) ليز ولين from TheClassicCaroVan on Vimeo.

The twins received their US Visa's when a group of US congressmen who were visiting India, attended one of their shows in Bombay.

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Having arrived in the US, they joined Syrian-American Eddie "The Sheik" Kochak and Iraqi violinist Hakki Obadia to create the sound called Ameraba, a fusion of American and Arab music.



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Shortly after moving to the US the sisters married and turned to teaching belly dancing rather than performing in night clubs.

Lyn passed away in 1992 and Liz in 2016. Her widower David Marks decided to share the amazing story of his late wife and her sister with the world by donating her archives to the National Library of Israel whereb they may inspire future dancers and lovers of Arab culture and Arab-Jewish art.

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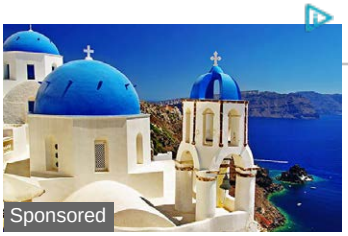
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