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BABYLONIAN TWINS JOURNEY FROM THE AMIGA TO THE IPAD



In software terms, *Babylonian Twins* is practically *ancient*. When it was first created, you (or maybe your parents) were finally playing *Mortal Kombat* on the Sega Genesis (or perhaps the bloodless version on the SNES). It was the age of a slew of newfangled game consoles like the 3DO and the Atari Jaguar. What, you don't remember those? That's what makes the existence of *Babylonian Twins* such an unlikely story: it survived, despite being programmed for the Commodore Amiga in Baghdad, where economic sanctions (and the death of Commodore) pretty much killed the project. Against all odds it's been given a second chance, with a bit of a facelift to hide those wrinkles and embarrassing blip-bloop sound effect. The game's creator, Rabah Shihab, reassembled the original team through the magic of the Internet and got to work, first on an Amiga demo which was released on YouTube, and then on its current incarnation on the iPhone and iPad



The game itself is vast, gorgeous, and challenging. You play both twins, Nasir and Blasir, as they battle an evil sorcerer to bring peace to the kingdom. Set in ancient Babylon, *Babylonian Twins* has a wide variety of settings which are (according to the creators) based on history books; the original graphics were made by an architecture student from Baghdad University. Unlike most iPhone games I've played, the levels are *huge*—it really feels more like an old console game than the casual games that usually appear on a mobile device, and it's great. Many of the levels have taken me around fifteen minutes to complete the first time through, and that's *if* I survive the first time. With only three lives per level and almost no way to replenish health, you have to be pretty careful to make it through. (More frequent checkpoints have been promised in a future update so you can pause more often if needed.)

The gameplay reminds me a little bit of that old game *Lost Vikings*: you can only control one twin at a time, and they each have different abilities. Nasir can jump higher and has a charge-and-dash that can smash through certain walls. Blasir has a mace that can smash open vases and drill down through the floor. In addition, the inactive twin turns into a statue that can be used to hold switches or help reach higher platforms. The levels are ingeniously designed and will have your gears turning to find which twin you need for each new puzzle. The goal of each level is to find the four golden palms and then make it to the exit door. Along the way you'll encounter guards who will only let you pass after finding certain treasures or keys.

Mario-like bounce on the head; others can't be harmed and must simply be avoided.

The graphics are eye-popping—I'd love to see the HD version on the iPad, but even on the iPod touch it's a treat to play. In the Holy Gardens levels, individual leaves will rustle and fall out of trees as you climb through them; the statues and paintings in the backgrounds are elaborate and really give you a sense of the beauty of ancient Mesopotamia. And with five different worlds, there's a good variety—you may find yourself stopping to admire the scenery. Fortunately, there's no time limit on the levels so you can gawk if you want.

There's a lot to this game, and I'm really impressed. I haven't even gotten to the ancient treasures that you can find. (Based on screenshots I've seen, they appear to be actual historical items.) And the website promises unlockable levels and future updates for even more levels, though I can tell this one will keep me occupied for a few more hours of gameplay as it is.

Babylonian Twins uses the OpenFeint service, which I'm liking more now that I have several apps that use it. It allows you to tie into Facebook or Twitter (if desired), stores your scores and achievements and lets you compare them to the rest of the world. For Amiga fans, it's worth noting that Shihab is hoping to release a version for the Amiga eventually, funded by iPhone and iPad sales.

Babylonian Twins is currently **on sale** until the end of this weekend, \$.99 for the [iPhone/iPad touch](#) version or \$1.99 for the [iPad](#) version. (I think regular price is \$3.99 for the iPhone, so now's a great time to check it out!) For more info, check out the [Babylonian Twins website](#). There's also a great review with a little more of the history on [TouchArcade](#).

__Wired: __Lush graphics, easy controls and formidable levels set *Babylonian Twins* apart from your average iPhone game. And the story behind the game's creation is almost as fascinating as the game itself.

__Tired: __Inability to save progress in the middle of a level—but hopefully this will be addressed soon.

Note: I received a free download of the iPhone version for review purposes.