

One sign, for instance, which may mean either one of the syllables kal, rib, lab or dan, if it stands at the end of a word following the syllable ki is almost always read rib, for kirib means within, but if it stands at the beginning of a word and is followed by nu, it generally means dan, as the word dannu means "powerful".

The failure to mark any separation between words greatly increases the difficulty of reading, because the ki before this sign may happen to the end of a preceding word or the nu following it may be the beginning of the next word. In view of the complicated nature of this system of writing, it is indeed strange to realize that it could have been so commonly used for such a long period of time. Fortunately the words are written out more fully than in Egyptian and this is the only one of the ancient Semitic systems of writing in which the vowels were expressed. With the help of the vowels, the grammar of Babylonia becomes much clearer and easier to understand than is the case in the vowelless writing of ancient Egypt.