

#LITERAL MEANINGS

Biblical Hebrew Names and Their Meanings

Hebrew names were deeply meaningful in ancient Israelite culture. Rather than being simple labels, they often conveyed statements about God's nature

מיכאל

Michael

My Hebrew Name

1

Daniel

דניאל

Daniyel

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God is my judge

In Biblical Hebrew, the word "El" means God and is one of the earliest and most widely used divine titles in the Hebrew Bible. This term appears not only as a name for God but also as a key element in many personal names. Such names are known as theophoric names, meaning they include a reference to God and express faith, identity, or theological belief. Hebrew names were deeply meaningful in ancient Israelite culture. Rather than being simple labels, they often conveyed statements about God's nature, a person's destiny, or a family's devotion. Names containing El commonly highlight divine attributes such as strength, justice, and uniqueness.

One well-known example is Daniel, which literally means "God is my judge." The name is formed from the Hebrew verb *dan*, meaning to judge, combined with *El*, meaning God. This name reflects trust in divine justice over human authority and is fittingly borne by the biblical figure Daniel, who is portrayed as faithful and wise in the face of persecution.

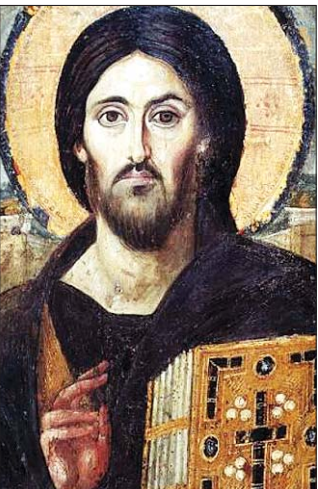
Another significant name is Gabriel, which means "God is my strength" or "mighty one of God." The name derives from the Hebrew root *g-b-r*, associated with strength and power, joined with *El*. In biblical tradition, Gabriel appears as a messenger of God, and his name emphasizes the idea that divine strength operates through him. The root *Geber*

itself means "strong man" or "mighty man." While Geber does not always include El as part of the name, it is an important linguistic root in Biblical Hebrew and forms the foundation for names such as Gabriel. In Scripture, *geber* is often used to describe a man characterized by strength, courage, or maturity.

The name Michael carries a uniquely theological meaning: "Who is like God?" Rather than making a direct statement, the name poses a rhetorical question. It is formed from *mi* (who), *kha* (like), and *El* (God), implying that no one can compare to God. Michael is depicted in biblical texts as a powerful heavenly protector, reinforcing the message of God's unmatched authority.

The repeated use of *El* in these names reflects the central role of God in Hebrew thought and daily life. By embedding God's name within personal identities, ancient Hebrews expressed dependence on divine justice, strength, and sovereignty. These names served as constant reminders of faith and covenant relationship.

In conclusion, Biblical Hebrew names containing *El* are rich in meaning and theology. Names such as Daniel, Gabriel, and Michael are not merely historical or religious labels but compact expressions of belief. Their literal meanings reveal how language, faith, and identity were deeply intertwined in the biblical world, leaving a lasting legacy that continues to influence religious and cultural traditions today.



אל

El

God



From the grandeur of the Vijayanagara Empire to the illuminated Mysore Palace, the 416th celebration of Mysuru Dasara tells a story of power, devotion, loss and survival. In October 2026, Mysuru celebrated Dasara for what is traditionally counted as the 416th time. Kingdoms have fallen, a palace has burned to the ground, a sultan has risen and fallen, and kings have lost their crowns. Yet, the festival has endured.

Mysuru Dasara is more than a religious celebration. It is a living historical tradition that has passed through empires, wars, colonial rule and independence. Its story raises an intriguing question: how does a festival once used by emperors and kings to display their power survive long after their kingdoms disappeared? To find the answer, we must travel back more than five centuries, to one of the richest and most powerful cities in southern India.

1443: A Persian Ambassador Witnesses the Grandeur

In 1443, Abdur Razaq, a Persian ambassador, arrived at Vijayanagara, the capital of a mighty South Indian empire. He encountered a city of extraordinary wealth, elaborate ceremonies and royal splendour.

Among the important celebrations of the empire was Mahanavami, associated with the ninth day of Navaratri. Foreign visitors recorded the grandeur of these festivities, providing valuable accounts of how the occasion was celebrated at the Vijayanagara court.

Around eight decades later, the Portuguese traveller Domingo Paes visited Vijayanagara during the reign of Emperor Krishnadevaraya. His account offers one of the most detailed descriptions of the empire's royal celebrations.

For nine days, the city witnessed feasts, dancers, wrestling competitions, elephants, horses, gifts and ceremonies honouring the goddess. The festivities brought together the religious traditions of the kingdom and the political authority of its ruler. At the centre of the celebrations stood the

Mahanavami Dibba, an elevated ceremonial platform. From this vantage point, the emperor presided over the festivities, while provincial governors and military chiefs, known as Nayakas, assembled to pay homage.

This was not merely a festival. It was a public demonstration of imperial authority.

Every governor who attended affirmed his connection to the emperor. Every procession, ceremony and royal appearance communicated the strength of the empire.

The celebration combined devotion with politics, spectacle with administration, and religion with the display of royal power.

But the empire that created this extraordinary tradition would not last forever.

1565: The Empire Falls, but Its Traditions Survive

In 1565, the Battle of Talikota dealt a devastating blow to the Vijayanagara Empire. Its forces were defeated by a coalition of Deccan sultanates, and the imperial capital was subsequently devastated and looted.

The empire did not disappear overnight, but its authority weakened dramatically. Its rulers struggled to maintain control over distant territories, and regional governors and local chiefs gradually asserted greater independence.

Among these regional powers was the Wadiyar family of Mysore. At the time, Mysore was a comparatively small kingdom. Farther north, on an island formed by the River Kaveri, stood the fortified town of Srirangapatna, an important centre of power associated with Vijayanagara's administration.

As the old empire weakened, the political landscape of southern India began to change. Local rulers sought to establish their own authority, and the traditions of the imperial court became symbols that could be adopted by emerging kingdoms.

The Wadiyars would use one such tradition to announce their arrival on the political stage.

1610: The Beginning of Mysore's Royal Dasara

In 1610, Raja Wadiyar I took control of Srirangapatna and established it as his capital. The precise circumstances surrounding the transfer of power are described differently in historical accounts, but the year is central to the traditional chronology of Mysuru Dasara.

A family tradition adds another important detail. In 1609, a royal throne was reportedly transferred to Raja Wadiyar by Tirumala, the

Vijayanagara viceroy. According to dynastic tradition, the throne had ancient associations with the Pandavas of the Mahabharata and had subsequently become connected with the Vijayanagara rulers.

Whether viewed as political symbolism or dynastic legend, the throne represented continuity with an older royal order.

Raja Wadiyar now possessed a capital, a throne and a growing kingdom. In 1610, he celebrated Dasara with royal ceremony at Srirangapatna.

The significance was unmistakable. The political centre of southern India was changing, but the grand imperial tradition was being preserved.

By adopting the ceremonies associated with Vijayanagara, the Wadiyars connected themselves with its prestige while presenting Mysore as an independent kingdom in its own right.

The year, 1610, is traditionally recognised as the starting point of the Mysore royal Dasara tradition. Counting from that year brings the festival's 416th celebration in 2026, although historical records and modern festival counts do not always follow an identical convention.

Alamelamma and the Curse of the Wadiyars

The story of Mysore's rise is also associated with one of Karnataka's most enduring legends: the curse of Alamelamma.

According to tradition, Alamelamma was connected to the former Vijayanagara administration at Srirangapatna. When Raja Wadiyar's forces took control, she is said to have fled with her jewellery.

The legend recounts that, pursued by the king's men, she threw her jewels into the River Kaveri, leapt into the water and pronounced a curse before her death. The curse supposedly declared that the Wadiyar dynasty would never have heirs.

The story became deeply woven into the dynasty's popular history. Successive generations interpreted episodes of uncertainty in the royal succession through the lens of Alamelamma's curse.

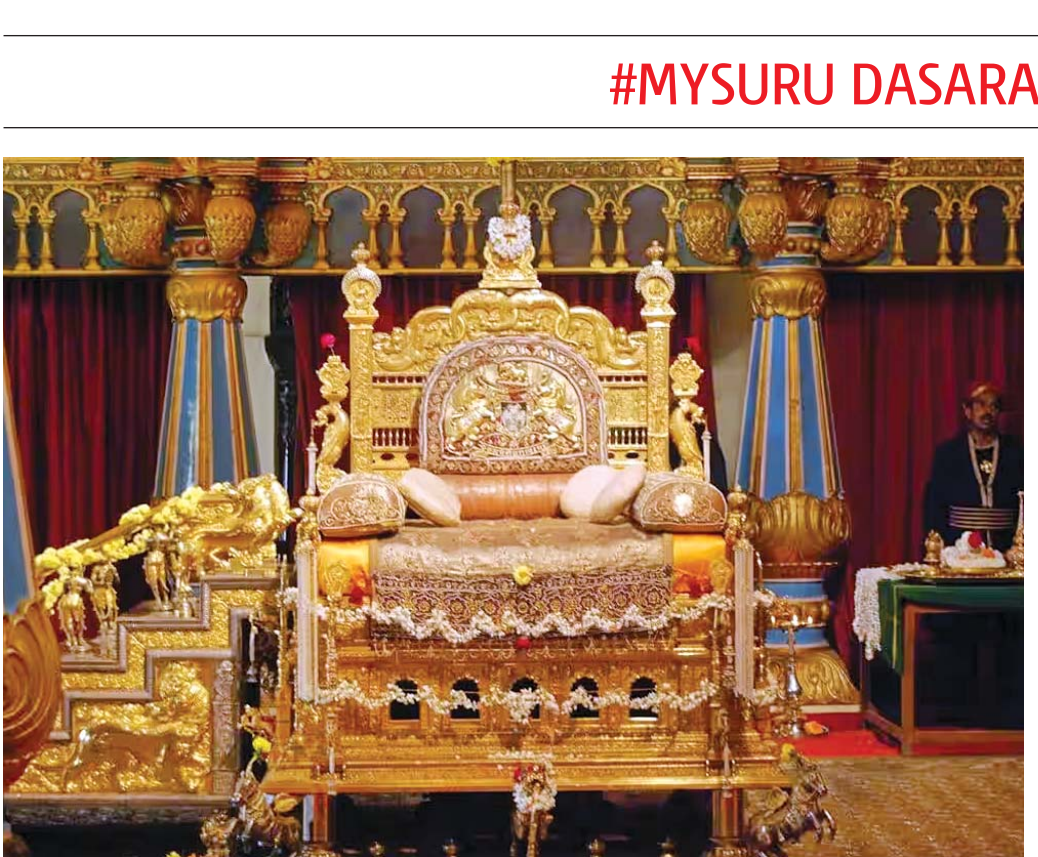
During Dasara, a doll representing Alamelamma is traditionally associated with worship inside the palace, reflecting the place her story occupies in the family's cultural memory.

The tale belongs to the realm of legend rather than established historical fact. Nevertheless, it reveals how the festival became intertwined not only with royal power but also with the beliefs, fears and memories of the dynasty that sustained it.

Dasara would soon return to prominence.

A Festival That Survived the Fall of Kings and Kingdoms

The howdah, a ceremonial seat covered with gold, represents the grandeur of Mysore's monarchy. Accounts commonly describe the structure as weighing around 750 kilograms, with approximately 80 kilograms of gold used in its covering, although descriptions of its weight and construction vary.



From Royal Grandeur to Political Uncertainty

For roughly a century and a half, the Wadiyars ruled from Srirangapatna, and Dasara remained an important royal celebration.

But by the 1760s, political authority was shifting. Hyder Ali, a military commander who rose through the Mysore state, became its effective ruler. The Wadiyar kings remained on the throne for periods under this new political arrangement, but their independent authority diminished.

What happened to Dasara during these years?

The festival continued, although its royal character and political significance changed as power moved away from the Wadiyar court. The continuity of the tradition was not always as grand as it had been during periods of strong royal patronage.

The festival allowed the monarchy to preserve its ceremonial importance even as the political environment around it changed.

In 1831, the British assumed direct administration of Mysore. For approximately five decades, the kingdom was administered under British authority rather than through the Wadiyar ruler's independent government.

Yet, Dasara endured. In 1881, administrative authority was restored to Chamarajendra Wadiyar X under the process known as the Rendition of Mysore.



Celebrating National Food Day: Honouring Nutrition and Community

National Food Day is observed to raise awareness about the importance of healthy eating, sustainable food practices, and access to nutritious meals for all. It encourages people to make mindful choices, appreciating fresh, wholesome ingredients while reducing processed foods. Beyond personal health, the day highlights the broader impact of food on communities, the environment, and local economies. Farmers, chefs, and nutritionists often come together to share knowledge, recipes, and initiatives that promote wellness. By celebrating National Food Day, individuals are reminded that food is not just fuel, it's culture, connection, and care.



tion preserved by the former royal family. The king no longer governs Mysore as a sovereign ruler, but the rituals associated with the dynasty remain part of the city's historical memory.

Vijayadashami: From the Banni Tree to the Torchlight Parade

The climax of Mysuru Dasara arrives on Vijayadashami, the tenth day of the festival.

The procession moves through the city towards Bannimantap, where the celebrations include the traditional worship of the banni, or shami, tree.

According to the Mahabharata tradition, the Pandavas hid their weapons in a banni tree during their period of exile. The tree subsequently became associated with the recovery of weapons, victory and preparation for battle.

Mysore's rulers traditionally worshipped the banni tree as part of the Dasara ceremonies, seeking blessings before military campaigns. The ritual connected religious observance with the older responsibilities of kingship and warfare.

Today the procession preserves this symbolic connection while serving as a major public celebration.

The festivities at Bannimantap culminate in the famous torchlight parade, featuring marching contingents, floats, illuminated formations and displays of coordinated movement.

What began within the context of royal and military ceremony has evolved into a large-scale cultural spectacle, attracting crowds eager to witness the final chapter of Dasara.

The weapons and armies of the old kingdom are gone. The ceremony, however, continues to recall their place in Mysore's history.

416 Celebrations Later, the Festival Still Stands

Mysuru Dasara has passed through extraordinary changes.

It inherited ceremonial traditions associated with the Vijayanagara Empire. It flourished under the Wadiyars, survived the rise of Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan, returned to prominence under British rule, endured British administration, witnessed the destruction of an old palace and continued after the monarchy lost its constitutional privileges.

At each turning point, the festival changed its form without disappearing.

Its royal processions became public celebrations. Its Golden Howdah ceased to carry a ruling Maharaja and began carrying the goddess of the festival, while requiring careful attention to animal health, welfare and safety.

For spectators, the decorated elephants provide a striking visual link to the royal processions described in historical accounts.

The Throne That Appears Only Once a Year

Inside the Mysore Palace, another tradition continues away from the crowds. The royal throne associated with the Wadiyar dynasty is assembled for Dasara and dismantled after the celebrations. Its components are stored securely during the rest of the year.

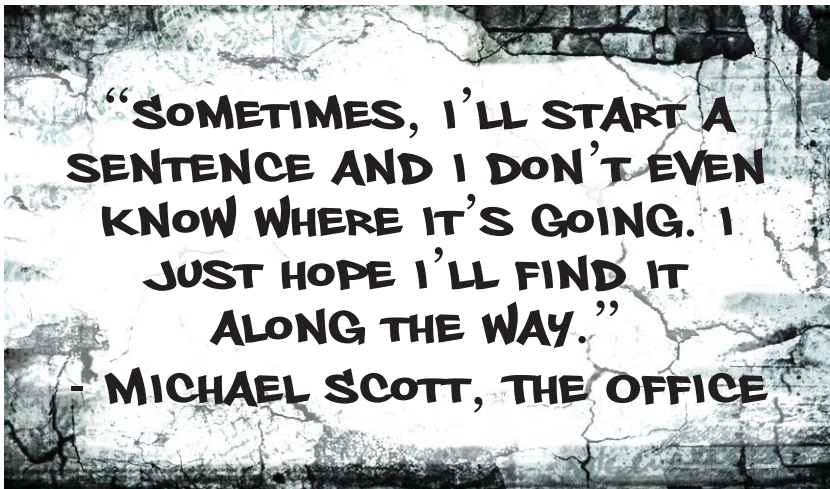
Traditionally described as incorporating figwood, ivory plaques and gold ornamentation, the throne represents the ceremonial authority of the dynasty.

During Navaratri, the head of the Wadiyar family conducts the private Khasi Darbar, maintaining a ritual associated with the old royal court.

Since 2015, Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamaraja Wadiyar has continued this family tradition. The private darbar is distinct from the state-organised public celebrations. Its continuation demonstrates how the festival now exists in two related forms: a public event belonging to Karnataka's cultural life and a private ceremonial tradition.

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THE WALL



BABY BLUES



ZITS



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