

THE NAMES DANIEL, DANILO, AND DANIELA: A STRATIFIED MODEL OF ONOMASTIC TRANSMISSION FROM HEBREW TO EUROPEAN LANGUAGES

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ABSTRACT

This study presents a comprehensive philological, onomastic, and historical-linguistic analysis of the personal names Daniel, Danilo, and Daniela within the framework of a model of stratified onomastic transmission. The research traces the origin of these names from their Biblical Hebrew form דָּנִיֵּאל (Dāniyyēl), with a detailed examination of its internal morphological structure (dān + -ī + 'ēl) and its theophoric meaning “God is my judge.” Particular attention is devoted to the pathways of transmission through the Greek Septuagint (Δανιήλ) and the Latin Vulgate (Daniel), as critical stages in the adaptation of the name into Indo-European linguistic systems.

The study integrates classical scholarship (Noth, Stamm, BDB, Strong) with contemporary research (1990–2026) and proposes a stratified analytical model that distinguishes between etymological origin, phonological adaptation, morphological integration, and semantic continuity. The central thesis of the study is that, despite systematic phonetic and structural transformations across different languages, the core semantic content of the name remains unchanged.

Particular emphasis is placed on Slavic developments, especially the form Danilo, which is interpreted not as a direct continuation of the Hebrew original, but as a secondary Slavic derivation from the base Daniel, shaped in accordance with local morphological patterns (cf. Mihailo, Gavriilo). Feminine forms such as Daniela are also analyzed as later Indo-European derivations.

Through comparative and quantitative analysis, the study demonstrates that the name Daniel represents a paradigmatic case of a semantically stable yet formally adaptive theophoric name. The findings contribute to broader discussions in Biblical onomastics, historical linguistics, and cultural transmission, introducing the concept of stratified onomastic continuity as a methodological framework applicable to other Biblical names.

KEYWORDS

Daniel; Danilo; Daniela; Biblical names; Hebrew onomastics; theophoric names; Septuagint; Vulgate; Indo-European languages; semantic stability; onomastic transmission

Introduction

Biblical personal names constitute one of the most enduring and stable components of the European onomastic tradition. Their specificity lies in the fact that they simultaneously function as linguistic, religious, and cultural entities that transcend the boundaries of individual linguistic systems and historical epochs. Unlike autochthonous naming systems, which are often tied to specific ethnic or regional contexts, Biblical names operate as transcultural phenomena whose distribution extends from the ancient Near East to contemporary European societies. For this reason, their study requires an interdisciplinary approach that integrates historical linguistics, Biblical philology, comparative onomastics, and studies of cultural transmission.¹

The name Daniel (Hebrew דַּנְיֵאל, *Dāniyyēl*) belongs to the group of theophoric names that contain a divine element (*'ēl*), thereby placing it within the central stratum of ancient Hebrew onomastic tradition. Such names were not merely identifiers of individuals, but also carriers of theological statements, often in the form of concise sentences expressing the relationship between God and the bearer of the name. In the case of the name Daniel, the semantic structure “God is my judge” reflects a typical syntagmatic formation combining a verbal root and a theophoric element, as extensively analyzed in classical studies of Semitic onomastics.² This semantic transparency plays a crucial role in the subsequent transmission of the name, as it enables the preservation of its core meaning even when the phonetic form undergoes transformation.

The continuity of this name from ancient Hebrew to modern European languages unfolds through a complex chain of transmission comprising several key stages. The first stage is the Biblical text itself, in which the name functions as part of a narrative and religious discourse. The second stage is its translation into Greek within the framework of the Septuagint, where the form Δανιήλ (*Daniēl*) represents a phonological adaptation of the Hebrew original into the Hellenistic linguistic system. The third stage is the Latin tradition, in which the form *Daniel* becomes standardized through the Vulgate and acquires the status of a normative form for Western European languages. This Greco-Latin channel represents the principal mechanism through which Biblical names entered the Indo-European linguistic sphere.³

Within European languages, the name *Daniel* exhibits an exceptionally high degree of distribution and adaptability. In the Germanic languages (English, German, Dutch, Scandinavian languages), the form remains nearly identical to the Latin model, with only minimal phonetic variation. In the Romance languages (French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian), the form *Daniel* likewise predominates, with occasional vocalic adaptations such as the Italian *Daniele*. In the Celtic languages (Irish, Welsh, Scottish Gaelic), the name has been integrated through the Christian tradition and demonstrates local phonetic adaptations while retaining a recognizable base. In the Slavic languages, however, additional morphological development occurs, where

alongside the form Danijel, the form Danilo also emerges, as well as a series of variants such as the Russian Daniil or the Ukrainian Danylo.⁴

This distribution indicates two fundamental models of adaptation of Biblical names within European languages. The first model may be described as conservative, in which the Latin form is retained with minimal phonetic changes (typical of Germanic and most Romance languages). The second model is innovative, characterized by morphological integration and the creation of new forms within the local linguistic system (typical of Slavic languages). The name Danilo represents a paradigmatic example of such innovation, as it does not exist as a direct continuation of the Hebrew form, but rather as a result of secondary derivation within the Slavic linguistic sphere.

The feminine form Daniela further confirms the universality of this process. It arises in European languages as a result of the grammatical necessity to distinguish gender, whereby the base form Daniel/Danijel is extended by the suffix -a. This process conforms to general principles of Indo-European morphology and may be understood as part of a broader tendency to transform Biblical masculine names into feminine forms (e.g., Michaela, Gabriela, Rafaela). Despite this transformation, the semantic structure of the name remains unchanged, thereby confirming the high degree of semantic stability characteristic of theophoric names within the European tradition.

Contemporary research in onomastics emphasizes that personal names function as important indicators of cultural identity and historical contact. In the context of European history, Biblical names represent one of the most significant layers connecting different linguistic communities through a shared religious and textual tradition.⁵ Their spread is not the result of spontaneous linguistic development, but of organized transmission through religious institutions, liturgical texts, educational systems, and cultural practice. For this reason, the analysis of the names Daniel, Danilo, and Daniela enables the reconstruction of a broader process in which Semitic linguistic elements are integrated into the Indo-European world.

The aim of this study is to provide a systematic and comprehensive analysis of the names Daniel, Danilo, and Daniela within the framework of the European onomastic tradition. The first objective is the etymological reconstruction of the original Hebrew form and its meaning. The second objective is the analysis of the morphological structure of the name and the identification of its constituent elements. The third objective is to trace the pathways of transmission through Greek and Latin as key intermediary stages. The fourth objective is to analyze the adaptation of the name in major European languages, including Germanic, Romance, Slavic, and other linguistic groups.

The methodological approach of this study is based on a combination of historical-linguistic analysis, comparative onomastics, and philological reading of sources. Particular attention is devoted to distinguishing between phonological changes, morphological transformations, and semantic stability. In this respect, the study proceeds from the thesis that Biblical names represent exceptionally stable semantic structures that adapt to different linguistic systems without loss of their core meaning.

Within a broader theoretical framework, this study contributes to the understanding of the relationship between Semitic and Indo-European languages through the prism of personal names. While contacts between these language families are often analyzed through lexicon, trade, or cultural influence, personal names offer a unique insight into long-term processes of transmission involving religion, identity, and tradition. The name Daniel and its derivatives therefore represent not only a linguistic phenomenon, but also a cultural bridge between the ancient Near Eastern and European worlds.

Footnotes

1. Carole Hough, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Names and Naming*, Oxford University Press, 2016.
2. Martin Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen*, Stuttgart, 1928; Jeaneane D. Fowler, *Theophoric Personal Names in Ancient Hebrew*, Sheffield, 1988.
3. Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, Fortress Press, 2012; Septuagint and Vulgate as key transmission layers.
4. Patrick Hanks, Richard Coates, Peter McClure, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of Family Names in Britain and Ireland*, Oxford University Press, 2016.
5. Malka Muchnik, “Reconstructing a Cultural Heritage: The Return of Biblical Personal Names in Israel”, *Onoma* 55 (2020).

2. Hebrew Origin and Structural Analysis of the Name

The name Daniel derives from the Biblical Hebrew form:
דָּנִיֵּאל (Dāniyyēl)

This form represents a typical example of a theophoric personal name within ancient Hebrew onomastics, that is, a name containing an element denoting a deity. Such names constitute the central stratum of the Semitic naming system and perform a profound religious and cultural function within ancient Israelite society.¹

2.1. Morphological Analysis of the Name

The name דָּנִיֵּאל (Dāniyyēl) can be segmented into three fundamental morphological components:

- דָּן (dān) — a verbal root derived from the Hebrew verb דָּן (dīn), meaning “to judge,” “to pass judgment,” “to decide”²
- יֵ (‑ī) — a first person singular possessive suffix, “my”³
- אֵל (’ēl) — the noun “God,” a frequent theophoric element in Hebrew personal names⁴

On the basis of this structure, the name Dāniyyēl constitutes a complex nominal construction that may be translated as:

- “God is my judge”
- or alternatively:
- “My judge is God”

This bidirectional interpretation arises from the syntactic flexibility of Hebrew theophoric names, in which the relationship between subject and predicate is not always rigidly fixed, but rather interpreted within the broader semantic pattern.⁵

2.2. Theophoric Structure and the Semitic Context

The name Daniel belongs to the broader category of theophoric names containing the element El. In ancient Hebrew and the wider Semitic world, El denotes God as the supreme deity and appears in a large number of personal names, such as:

- Mikael (מִיכָאֵל) — “Who is like God?”
- Gavri’el (גַּבְרִיאֵל) — “God is my strength”
- Rafa’el (רַפְאֵל) — “God has healed”

These names frequently take the form of short sentences or declarations of faith, thereby confirming their function as carriers of religious identity.⁶ Classical studies by Martin Noth have demonstrated that such names were dominant in ancient Israelite society and represented the standard naming model.⁷

Jeaneane D. Fowler further emphasizes that theophoric names should not be regarded merely as linguistic constructions, but rather as “compact theological statements” reflecting both individual and collective relationships to the divine.⁸ In this sense, the name Daniel does not simply designate an individual, but also conveys a specific theological position: the acknowledgment of God as the supreme judge.

2.3. Phonological Features and Reconstruction of the Form

The form Dāniyyēl contains several significant phonological features:

- a long vowel ā in the first syllable
- gemination (doubling) of the consonant yod (י)
- a final vowel ē in the component El

The gemination in the form yy indicates a morphological structure characteristic of certain Hebrew forms and plays an important role in the reconstruction of historical pronunciation.

According to the Brown–Driver–Briggs lexicon, the name consistently appears in this form in the Masoretic Text, confirming its stability.⁹

Strong’s concordance system (H1840) likewise identifies the name Daniel as derived from the root דָּן (dān) and the theophoric element El, with the meaning “God is my judge.”¹⁰ This interpretation is corroborated by modern lexicographical works and digital databases.

2.4. Earliest Attestations and Historical Context

The name דָּנִיֵּאל first appears in the Biblical text, most prominently in the Book of the Prophet Daniel, which in its final form is dated to the 2nd century BCE, although it describes events from the Babylonian exile in the 6th century BCE.¹¹

However, the name Daniel is not limited to this book. It also appears in other parts of the Hebrew Bible:

- Ezekiel 14:14 and 28:3 — where Daniel is mentioned alongside Noah and Job as an example of righteousness and wisdom

These passages are particularly important, as they indicate that the name Daniel belongs to an older tradition than the book that bears his name. Some scholars suggest that this may reflect an earlier, possibly even pre-Biblical tradition.¹²

Within the broader Ancient Near Eastern context, the name Dan’el (without the suffix -ī) is also attested in Ugaritic texts (Ras Shamra, 14th–13th century BCE), where the figure Dn’il appears as a righteous judge in the Aqhat epic.¹³ This parallel is of considerable importance, as it demonstrates that the name, or at least its underlying structure, forms part of a wider Semitic tradition.

2.5. Semantic Stability Over Time

One of the most significant characteristics of the name Daniel is its exceptional semantic stability. From its earliest Semitic forms to its modern manifestations in European languages, the core meaning “God is my judge” remains unchanged.

In contrast to many other names that lose their original semantic content over time, theophoric names such as Daniel preserve their meaning due to:

- their religious context (continuous presence in sacred texts)
- liturgical usage
- educational and cultural transmission

Contemporary research in onomastics confirms that religious names belong among the most stable elements of the lexical system.¹⁴

2.6. Concluding Remark

The name דַּנְיֵאֵל (Dāniyyēl) represents a classical example of a Hebrew theophoric name with a clearly defined morphological structure and a stable semantic content. Its analysis demonstrates:

- a complex combination of a verbal root, a possessive suffix, and a divine element
- deep rootedness in the Semitic religious tradition
- early attestation in both Biblical and pre-Biblical texts
- continuity of meaning over more than two millennia

These characteristics make the name Daniel an ideal case study for the analysis of the transmission of Biblical names into European languages, which will be the subject of the following chapters.

Footnotes

1. Hough, C. (2016) *The Oxford Handbook of Names and Naming*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
2. Brown, F., Driver, S.R., Briggs, C.A. (1906) *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
3. Gesenius, W. (1910) *Hebrew Grammar*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
4. Strong, J. (1890) *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon.
5. Fowler, J.D. (1988) *Theophoric Personal Names in Ancient Hebrew*. Sheffield: JSOT Press.
6. Stamm, J.J. (1980) *Beiträge zur hebräischen und altorientalischen Namenkunde*. Freiburg.
7. Noth, M. (1928) *Die israelitischen Personennamen*. Stuttgart.
8. Fowler, J.D. (1988).
9. Brown, Driver, Briggs (1906).
10. Strong (1890), entry H1840.
11. Collins, J.J. (1993) *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
12. Day, J. (2002) *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*. Sheffield Academic Press.
13. Parker, S.B. (1997) *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*. Atlanta: Scholars Press.
14. Hanks, P. et al. (2016) *The Oxford Dictionary of Family Names in Britain and Ireland*. Oxford University Press.

3. Phonological and Morphological Features of the Original Form

The original Hebrew form of the name Daniel, דַּנְיֵיִל (Dāniyyēl), exhibits a high degree of phonological and morphological structuring characteristic of Biblical Hebrew. The analysis of this form requires consideration of several key elements: the presence and function of gemination (dagesh), the vocalic system, the theophoric ending -'ēl, and, finally, the relationship between phonetic change and semantic stability. In this chapter, these elements are examined within the framework of the classical Hebraistic tradition (Gesenius, BDB, Strong), as well as in light of contemporary research (2000–2026), including more recent onomastic approaches.

3.1. Dagesh and the Question of Gemination in the Form דַּנְיֵיִל

In the standard Masoretic vocalization, the form דַּנְיֵיִל (Dāniyyēl) displays a series of orthographic and phonological features that have been subject to varying interpretations. One of the questions frequently raised concerns the presence or absence of gemination within the internal segment of the name.

It is necessary to specify precisely: in the form דַּנְיֵיִל there is no dagesh in the letter נ (nun); rather, the phonetic effect of lengthening is realized through the sequence -iyy- (יֵי), that is, through the presence of a double yod within the morphological structure.¹ This sequence may indicate historical development of the form or a morphologically lengthened vocalization, but it does not constitute classical consonantal gemination through dagesh.

In classical grammar (Gesenius), it is emphasized that similar sequences occur in forms where vocalic lengthening combines with morphological suffixation, particularly in theophoric names.² The Brown–Driver–Briggs lexicon likewise records the form דַּנְיֵיִל without explicit consonantal gemination, confirming that what is present here is a vocalic-consonantal sequence rather than phonological doubling.³

In contemporary studies of Biblical Hebrew, this phenomenon is interpreted as the result of historical phonological evolution, in which the intervocalic glide (yod) stabilizes in a doubled form in order to preserve syllabic structure.⁴

3.2. Vocalism: ā–ī–ē as a Structural Pattern

One of the most stable characteristics of the name Dāniyyēl is its vocalic pattern:

→ ā – ī – ē

This sequence is not accidental, but reflects a deep morphological organization:

- ā (qamatz) in the first syllable (dā-)
- ī (ḥireq) in the medial segment (-ni-)
- ē (tsere) in the final component (-'ēl)

Such a distribution of vowels is characteristic of theophoric names in Hebrew, particularly those that combine a verbal root with a suffix and a divine element.⁵

Phonologically, this pattern enables:

- clear syllabic segmentation
- stability of accentuation
- resistance to phonetic change in later linguistic stages

Modern linguists emphasize that vocalic patterns constitute a key to the reconstruction of the historical pronunciation of Biblical names.⁶ In the case of the name Daniel, the preservation of the relationship between \bar{a} , \bar{i} , and \bar{e} facilitated the relatively easy recognition of the name even after its transition into Greek and Latin.

3.3. The Ending -'ēl as a Theophoric Element

The final segment of the name, $\text{לֵא} ('ēl)$, represents one of the most significant elements in the analysis. This element is widely attested in Semitic languages and denotes God as the supreme deity.

In Hebrew onomastics, -'ēl appears in a large number of names and functions as:

- a bearer of theological meaning
- a marker of religious identity
- a stable morphological element

Classical studies (Noth, Stamm) have demonstrated that names ending in -el constitute one of the dominant types within the ancient Israelite tradition.⁷ In this respect, the name Daniel conforms to the standard structural pattern: a verbal or nominal root + a theophoric element.

In contemporary research, including studies in digital onomastics, it has been confirmed that theophoric names are among the most resistant to semantic change, precisely because of their religious function.⁸

Within the framework of the present study:

Stanojević (2026) emphasizes that the theophoric element El in Biblical names functions as a “semantic anchor,” ensuring stability of meaning across different linguistic and cultural transformations.⁹ This formulation is particularly applicable to the name Daniel, in which the element El secures the preservation of the name’s core message.

3.4. Reasons for the Stability of the Noun דָּן (“Judgment”) in the Structure

The root of the name, דָּן (dān), derived from the verb דָּן (dīn), carries the meaning “to judge,” “to render judgment.” This root plays a highly significant role in Biblical language and theology.

The reasons for its stability within the name are multiple:

1. High frequency in the Biblical text
The root דָּן occurs in various forms and contexts, making it semantically recognizable.¹⁰
2. Theological significance
The concept of God as judge constitutes a central motif in Old Testament theology.
3. Simple phonological structure
The monosyllabic form dān integrates easily into compound names.
4. Compatibility with theophoric elements
The root combines naturally with El, without phonological conflict.

For these reasons, the segment dan remains recognizable in all later forms of the name, including Greek, Latin, and European variants.

3.5. Absence of Semantic Change Despite Phonetic Adaptations

One of the key features of the name Daniel is the fact that its meaning remains stable throughout all stages of transmission:

- Hebrew: Dāniyyēl
- Greek: Daniēl
- Latin: Daniel
- European languages: Daniel, Danijel, Daniele, Daniil

Despite phonetic changes (loss of gemination, vowel modification, orthographic adaptation), the underlying semantic structure remains unchanged.

Contemporary onomastic research confirms that religious names are among the most resistant to semantic change, as they are continually “renewed” through liturgical and textual usage.¹¹

In this respect, the name Daniel represents a paradigmatic case:

→ phonetic change ≠ semantic change

This stability allows the name to function as a continuous cultural marker, recognizable across different linguistic and historical contexts.

3.6. Concluding Synthesis

The phonological and morphological features of the name Dāniyyēl exhibit a high degree of systematicity:

- absence of classical gemination, but presence of the sequence -iyy-
- stable vocalic pattern ā-ī-ē
- theophoric ending -'ēl as the key semantic element
- the root dān as the bearer of meaning
- complete semantic stability throughout history

These characteristics confirm that the name Daniel is not merely a linguistic unit, but a structured onomastic system that enables long-term transmission without loss of meaning.

4. Transmission into Ancient Languages: A Key Phase

4.1. Greek: Septuagint — Δανιήλ (Daniēl)

The transmission of the Hebrew name דַּנְיֵיִל (Dāniyyēl) into the Greek form Δανιήλ (Daniēl) represents one of the decisive phases in the history of this name, since it is precisely the Greek form that becomes the principal intermediary bridge between the Biblical Hebrew tradition and later European languages. At this stage, the name ceases to function solely as a Hebrew or Aramaic name within the Semitic textual world and becomes part of the Hellenistic, and subsequently Christian, linguistic and cultural sphere. The Septuagint, as the most important Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, played a decisive role in transmitting Biblical names from the Semitic into the Indo-European linguistic system.¹

In the Greek tradition, the name appears as Δανιήλ, transliterated Daniēl. This form exhibits a high degree of phonetic proximity to the Hebrew דַּנְיֵיִל, while at the same time reflecting adaptation to the Greek phonological and orthographic system. The Greek form preserves the basic consonantal sequence d-n-y/ and -l, but modifies the representation of vowels and removes the internal structural complexity visible in the Masoretic vocalization Dāniyyēl. In Greek, therefore, the full phonological depth of the Hebrew form is not transmitted; rather, a functional transliteration suitable for Greek pronunciation and usage is produced.²

It is important to emphasize that the Book of Daniel possesses a particularly complex textual history. Contemporary scholarship distinguishes at least three major textual traditions: the Masoretic Hebrew-Aramaic tradition, the Old Greek version, and the so-called Theodotionic (revised Greek) version. Amanda M. Davis Bledsoe notes that the Book of Daniel is among the most textually complex books of the Hebrew Bible, preserved in multiple editions whose interrelationships remain only partially resolved in modern scholarship.³ This is significant for

the present analysis, since the form Daniēl appears within the broader process of Greek textual stabilization of the book and its protagonist.

The Septuagintal form Δανιήλ should not be understood as a translation in the strict sense, but rather as a transliteration. In other words, the Greek translator did not attempt to render the meaning “God is my judge” into Greek, but instead transmitted the phonetic form of the name. This corresponds to the general practice in the Septuagint: Biblical personal names are typically not translated semantically, but adapted to Greek writing and pronunciation. Such a procedure preserves the identity of Biblical figures, while simultaneously leading to phonological simplification of the original form.⁴

The first major change is the elimination of the Hebrew geminal structure. In the Masoretic form Dāniyyēl, the segment -iyy- reflects a more complex internal phonological organization. The Greek form Δανιήλ, however, does not possess a system for representing such gemination. Instead, the Hebrew sequence -iyyē- is simplified into Greek -ιή- (-iē-). In this way, the name is adapted to the Greek phonological system, in which Hebrew internal length and doubling are not reproduced in the same manner. The result is the form Daniēl, which preserves recognizability but not all phonetic details of the Hebrew original.

The second important change concerns vocalism. The Hebrew form has the structure Dā-niyy-ēl, with a long vowel ā in the first syllable, a medial ī/iyy segment, and a final ē in the theophoric element ’ēl. The Greek form Δανιήλ reorganizes this vocalism according to the capacities of the Greek script and pronunciation. The first syllable Δα- (Da-) no longer clearly marks the Hebrew long ā, but represents it through Greek alpha. The medial segment -νιή- conveys niē, while the ending -ήλ (-ēl) relatively faithfully preserves the theophoric component. The preservation of the ending -ήλ is particularly significant, as it maintains a visible trace of the Hebrew El element, even if the Greek reader does not necessarily understand its Semitic meaning.

The third characteristic is the relative indeclinability of the name in Greek usage. In Biblical Greek, Δανιήλ may be treated as a proper name of foreign origin, and such names often remain indeclinable or display limited morphological integration. Mounce’s Greek lexicon lists Δανιήλ, ó, transliterated Daniēl, and identifies it as a proper name, also noting the meaning “God [El] is my judge.”⁵ This confirms that within the Greek tradition the name is preserved as a recognizable Biblical anthroponym rather than a fully Hellenized lexical item.

The fourth characteristic is the preservation of semantic identity despite phonetic reduction. Although the Greek form does not reproduce all Hebrew phonological features, it does not sever the connection with the original meaning. Strong’s Greek entry for Δανιήλ links the form to the Hebrew דַּנְיֵאל and דַּנְיָאֵל and interprets it as “judge of God” or “God is my judge.”⁶ This lexicographical tradition demonstrates that the Greek form was understood as carrying the same onomastic content as the Hebrew original.

In text-critical terms, the Greek Daniel is particularly significant because the Book of Daniel survives in two major Greek traditions: the Old Greek and the Theodotonic version. The NETS translation explicitly notes that it is based on two Greek versions and that one of the major challenges of translation is to indicate where these versions coincide and where they differ.⁷

This confirms that the form Δανιήλ stands within a much more complex history of Greek transmission, involving not only phonetics but also textual pluriformity.

Nevertheless, for onomastic analysis, the most important point is that the personal name stabilizes very early in the Greek form. Regardless of differences between the Old Greek and Theodotonic traditions, the name of the protagonist remains consistently recognizable as Δανιήλ. This indicates that the onomastic core is more resistant than the narrative and textual variations between versions. Such stability is typical of Biblical personal names: even when textual traditions vary, the name of the central figure generally remains stable enough to ensure continuity of identification.

From the perspective of the broader history of European languages, the Greek form Δανιήλ has an intermediary function. It prepares the ground for the Latin Daniel, which will later become the dominant form in Western European tradition. Thus, a transmission chain is established:

דָּנִיֵּאל → Δανιήλ → Daniel

This chain demonstrates that, in most cases, European forms of the name do not derive directly from Hebrew, but through the Greco-Latin channel. This is particularly important for Romance and Germanic languages, as well as for Slavic languages, where Christian and liturgical traditions played a decisive role in the transmission of Biblical names.

On the phonological level, the Greek form represents a transitional phase between the Semitic naming system and European adaptation. The Hebrew form is morphologically transparent for a reader of Hebrew: dān + -ī + 'ēl. The Greek form, however, is phonetically transparent but morphologically less so. A Greek reader can pronounce and recognize the name as Biblical, but its internal Hebrew structure is no longer directly accessible without lexicographical or philological knowledge. At this point begins the process that will accompany the name throughout European languages: the phonetic form spreads, while the original Hebrew morphology becomes increasingly distant from everyday linguistic awareness.

Nevertheless, the meaning is not entirely lost, since it is preserved through exegetical, lexicographical, and theological traditions. Commentaries, dictionaries, concordances, and translations continually renew the connection between the form Daniel and the meaning “God is my judge.” It may therefore be stated that, in the Greek phase, a distinction emerges between phonetic transmission and semantic memory: the name is formally adapted to Greek, but its meaning is preserved through interpretative tradition.

In conclusion, the Greek form Δανιήλ (Daniēl) represents a key phase in the European history of the name Daniel. Three decisive processes occur at this stage: first, Hebrew phonological complexity is simplified; second, the name is adapted to the Greek vocalic and orthographic system; third, the semantic core remains stable. This phase enabled the name to pass from the Semitic Biblical context into the Hellenistic world, and subsequently, through Latin and Christian tradition, into virtually all major European languages.

Footnotes

1. Pietersma, A. and Wright, B.G. (eds.) (2007/2009) *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*. New York: Oxford University Press.
2. Mounce, W.D. (n.d.) ‘Δανιήλ’, *Mounce Greek Dictionary*.
3. Davis Bledsoe, A.M. (2015) ‘The Relationship of the Different Editions of Daniel: A History of Scholarship’, *Currents in Biblical Research*, 13(2), pp. 175–190.
4. Tov, E. (2012) *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*. 3rd edn. Minneapolis: Fortress Press; Fernández Marcos, N. (2000) *The Septuagint in Context*. Leiden: Brill.
5. Mounce, W.D. (n.d.) ‘Δανιήλ’, *Mounce Greek Dictionary*.
6. Strong, J. (1890) *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, Greek entry 1158; BibleHub (n.d.) ‘Greek 1158: Δανιήλ’.
7. Pietersma, A. and Wright, B.G. (eds.) (2007/2009) *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*.

5. Latin (Vulgate): Daniel

The Latin phase in the history of the name דַּנְיֵאֵל (*Dāniyyēl*) represents a key moment in its long-term standardization and dissemination within the European sphere. While the Greek form Δανιήλ (*Daniēl*) enabled the entry of the name into the Hellenistic cultural context, the Latin form *Daniel*, established within the framework of the Vulgate, ensured its normative stability and functional integration into the Western European linguistic and cultural system. This phase cannot be regarded merely as a linguistic adaptation, but rather as part of a broader process of textual, liturgical, and institutional standardization of Biblical names.¹

5.1. Historical-Philological Context of the Vulgate

The Vulgate was produced at the end of the 4th and the beginning of the 5th century CE within the context of the need for a unified and reliable Latin text of the Holy Scripture. Prior to Jerome’s work, various versions of Latin translations (*Vetus Latina*) were in use, differing among themselves in text, terminology, and stylistic solutions.² This heterogeneity complicated liturgical practice and theological interpretation.

Jerome’s translation program was characterized by two key principles:

1. a critical approach to existing translations
2. a return to the original languages (Hebrew and Greek)

Unlike earlier translators, Jerome relied on the Hebrew text for a large portion of the Old Testament, thereby establishing a philologically grounded approach to translation.³ However, in the case of the Book of Daniel, the situation is more complex: within the Latin tradition, this book largely relies on the Greek version, particularly that of Theodotion, which has direct consequences for the form of personal names in the text.⁴

5.2. The Form Daniel Between Hebrew and Greek Sources

The Latin form *Daniel* represents the result of a transliterational practice that balances between the Hebrew original and the Greek intermediary form. Although strict reliance on the Hebrew might have led to a different graphic solution, the Latin form clearly demonstrates continuity with the Greek Δανιήλ.

The reasons for this stabilization may be systematized as follows:

- graphic compatibility with the Latin system
- adoption of already established Christian terminology from Greek
- preservation of recognizability of Biblical figures within the liturgical context

In this sense, the form *Daniel* is not the result of an arbitrary decision, but rather a compromise between philological precision and functional usability in the Latin language.⁵

5.3. Phonological Adaptation and Reduction of Hebrew Features

The Latin form *Daniel* exhibits a series of systematic phonological adaptations in relation to the Hebrew *Dāniyyēl*:

- elimination of the sequence -iyy-
- reduction of the vocalic contrast ā-ī-ē
- preservation of the final segment -el

The Latin phonological system does not possess mechanisms for the precise representation of Hebrew vowel length and gemination, which leads to simplification of the structure. However, this reduction is not arbitrary: it follows general principles of adaptation of foreign names in Latin, where priority is given to stability of pronunciation and graphic economy.⁶

It is important to emphasize that, despite phonological reduction, the basic structure of the name remains recognizable. The segment *Dan-* and the ending *-el* enable identification of the name as Biblical, even without knowledge of its Hebrew morphological structure.

5.4. The Theophoric Element and Semantic Continuity

The ending *-el*, derived from the Hebrew 'ēl (“God”), is preserved in the Latin form *Daniel*, although it is no longer transparent to the Latin speaker. It is precisely in this segment that the phenomenon of separation between formal form and semantic content becomes visible.

While the Hebrew form allows immediate understanding of the meaning (“God is my judge”), the Latin form requires mediation through:

- exegetical commentaries
- theological traditions
- lexicographical sources

Classical lexicons such as BDB and Strong continue to connect the Latin and Greek forms with the Hebrew root דָּן (*dīn*), thereby ensuring continuity of meaning.⁷

Modern research in Biblical onomastics emphasizes that precisely this combination of formal adaptation and semantic stability is crucial for the longevity of theophoric names.⁸

5.5. The Vulgate as a Normative Model in European Onomastics

One of the central characteristics of the Latin phase is the fact that the Vulgate becomes the normative text of the Western Church. This normativity has direct consequences for the spread and stabilization of personal names.

In the period from the early Middle Ages to the modern era:

- Latin functions as the language of education and administration
- Biblical texts are transmitted through the Latin tradition
- personal names from the Vulgate enter vernacular languages

In this process, the form *Daniel* becomes the referential model for European languages. This phenomenon is confirmed by modern onomastic studies, which demonstrate that Latin forms of Biblical names often serve as the basis for their modern variants.⁹

It is important, however, to avoid the simplified assumption that all European forms develop directly from Latin. In many cases, transmission involves a complex interaction between Latin, Greek, and local traditions. Nevertheless, within the Western European context, the Latin form remains the dominant model.

5.6. Latin as an Intermediary System in Transmission to Indo-European Languages

The role of the Latin language in the spread of the name *Daniel* may be more precisely defined as intermediary and standardizing, rather than as the sole source of all later forms. Latin enables:

- a stable graphic form
- wide geographical dissemination
- integration into various linguistic systems

On this basis, the following transmission model may be reconstructed:

→ דָּן → Δανιήλ → Daniel → European variants

This model is confirmed by contemporary studies in historical linguistics and Biblical philology, which emphasize the key role of Latin as a “distributional medium” in European culture.¹⁰

5.7. Concluding Remark

The Latin form *Daniel*, established in the Vulgate, represents the result of a complex process in which the Hebrew original, the Greek intermediary tradition, and Latin standardization converge. Its principal characteristics may be summarized as follows:

- phonological adaptation with preservation of the basic structure
- loss of morphological transparency of the Hebrew form
- preservation of semantic content through interpretative tradition
- institutional stabilization through the Vulgate

This phase represents a key step in the transformation of the name *Daniel* from a local Semitic anthroponym into a universal European cultural element.

Footnotes

1. Kelly, J.N.D. (1975) *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies*. London: Duckworth.
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6. Adams, J.N. (2007) *The Regional Diversification of Latin 200 BC–AD 600*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
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8. Fowler, J.D. (1988) *Theophoric Personal Names in Ancient Hebrew*. Sheffield: JSOT Press; Hough, C. (ed.) (2016) *The Oxford Handbook of Names and Naming*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
9. Hanks, P., Coates, R. and McClure, P. (2016) *The Oxford Dictionary of Family Names in Britain and Ireland*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
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6. Dissemination into Indo-European Languages

6.1. General Mechanisms of Transmission

The dissemination of the name *Daniel* from the Hebrew דַּנְיֵאל (*Dāniyyēl*) into Indo-European languages cannot be understood as a simple lexical transfer from one language to another. Rather, it is a multilayered process involving the Biblical text, translation practice, ecclesiastical

usage, liturgical stabilization, phonological adaptation, and local name formation. Precisely for this reason, the name *Daniel* represents a particularly suitable example for the study of the broader transmission of Biblical anthroponyms from the Semitic into the European linguistic sphere. Jože Krašovec, in his study on phonetic factors in the transliteration of Biblical proper names, explicitly emphasizes that the modern forms of Biblical names in European languages have been shaped by phonetic changes that arose during their transmission from Hebrew and Aramaic into Greek and Latin, and subsequently from those languages into later European languages.¹

The first mechanism of transmission is the religious canon. The name *Daniel* did not spread as an ordinary borrowing, but as the name of a Biblical figure. Its European reception therefore did not depend solely on linguistic contact, but on the authority of the sacred text. The Septuagint enabled the entry of the name into the Greek cultural and Christian sphere, while the Vulgate ensured its Latin standardization in Western Europe. The position of the Book of Daniel in different canons shows that it occupied different placements in the Tanakh, the Septuagint, the Vulgate, and the Protestant canon, but that the name of the central Biblical figure remained stable across these traditions.²

The second mechanism is phonological adaptation. In the transition from Hebrew to Greek, and subsequently to Latin, the name loses certain features of the original form: the Hebrew sequence -iyy- is simplified, vowel lengths are adapted to the Greek and Latin systems, while the final theophoric element -el is retained as a recognizable formal ending. Krašovec specifically points out that the Greek and Latin alphabets did not possess complete equivalents for certain Semitic sounds, which required translators to produce functional rather than fully phonetically precise transliterations.³

The third mechanism is morphological integration. Once the name enters European languages, it begins to conform to their grammatical rules. In English, German, French, Spanish, and Portuguese, the form *Daniel* remains close to the Latin model. In Italian, the form *Daniele* appears, corresponding to the Italian tendency toward vowel-final masculine names. In Slavic languages, additional morphological development occurs: *Danijel*, *Danilo*, *Daniil*, *Danylo*. In this way, the name does not change its etymological identity, but acquires a local morphological form.

The fourth mechanism is derivation and the formation of new forms. From the masculine form *Daniel* arise feminine forms such as *Daniela*, *Danijela*, *Danielle*, *Daniella*, as well as hypocoristics and shortened forms: *Dan*, *Danny*, *Dani*, *Daan*, *Danilo*, *Danila*. This process demonstrates that the European reception of the name was not passive. Languages did not merely adopt the Biblical name; they integrated it into their own morphological systems.

6.2. Western European Languages: English, French, and German

In Western European languages, the form *Daniel* exhibits a high degree of conservatism. English *Daniel* continues the Latin form almost directly, with adaptation to English phonetics. Within the English tradition, the name is stabilized through Biblical translations, ecclesiastical usage, and

later civil anthroponymy. Hanks, Hardcastle, and Hodges, in *A Dictionary of First Names*, identify *Daniel* as a name of Hebrew origin with the meaning “God is my judge,” confirming that English lexicographical tradition preserves awareness of the Hebrew origin of the name, even though the form itself is mediated through the Greco-Latin channel.⁴

The French form *Daniel* likewise retains the Latin orthography, but undergoes phonetic reduction in accordance with French pronunciation rules. The written ending -el remains visible, but its phonetic realization depends on the contemporary French accentual and vocalic system. In this case, morphological change is minimal, while phonetic adaptation is more pronounced. This confirms the general principle that European languages often preserve Biblical orthographic tradition while pronouncing it according to their own phonological rules.

German *Daniel* also remains highly conservative in orthography. The differences primarily concern stress and vowel realization, rather than morphological structure. In German, the name is integrated into the standard system of masculine personal names without the need for additional suffixes or major formal adaptation. Thus, English, French, and German represent a type of European reception in which the Latin form is transmitted with minimal morphological modification.

For these three languages, a shared characteristic may be identified: retention of the Latin form combined with local phonetic realization. In them, the name *Daniel* functions as an international Biblical anthroponym, rather than as a deeply localized derivational form. This demonstrates that within the Western European sphere the Latin model possessed particularly strong normative authority.

6.3. Romance Languages: Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese

In the Romance languages, the name *Daniel* exhibits a high degree of continuity with the Latin form, which is expected given the direct genealogical relationship between Latin and the Romance languages. Spanish *Daniel* and Portuguese *Daniel* preserve the basic Latin form without significant morphological change. In these languages, the name is easily integrated because its phonological structure does not violate Romance patterns of syllabic organization.

The Italian form *Daniele* represents a more significant adaptation. The addition of the final vowel -e does not constitute an etymological change in the strict sense, but rather a morphological-phonological adjustment to the Italian system, in which final vowels are characteristic of a large number of masculine names. In this way, Latin *Daniel* is locally reshaped as *Daniele*, while the fundamental identification with the Biblical name remains fully preserved.

This Italian form demonstrates the distinction between formal expansion and etymological change. *Daniele* is not a new name independent of *Daniel*, but an Italian realization of the same Biblical anthroponym. The final -e serves integration into the Italian linguistic system, not a change of meaning. In this respect, Italian represents an intermediate model between the

conservative Western European form *Daniel* and the more morphologically innovative Slavic forms.

6.4. Slavic Languages: Danijel, Danilo, Daniil, Danylo

Slavic languages represent the most significant part of this analysis because within them the name *Daniel* does not remain merely a Latin or Greek pattern, but undergoes secondary morphological development. In Serbian, the forms *Danijel*, *Danilo*, and *Danijela* appear. The form *Danijel* preserves the most direct connection with the Greco-Latin model, while *Danilo* represents a Slavic adaptation that requires special explanation. The feminine form *Danijela* arises through the standard addition of the feminine ending *-a* to the base *Danijel*.

The Russian form ДАНИИЛ (*Daniil*) is particularly interesting because it graphically preserves the double *ii*, thereby reflecting, to some extent, the internal vocalic structure of the Greek-Hebrew model within Slavic reception. Alongside it, there exist forms ДАНИЛ (*Danil*) and ДАНИЛА (*Danila*), demonstrating that Slavic languages develop multiple parallel forms from the same Biblical source.

The Ukrainian ДАНИЛО (*Danylo*) confirms the broader East Slavic presence of forms with the ending *-ilo/-ylo*. In the South Slavic area, the form *Danilo* has particularly strong historical and cultural attestation. Polish *Daniel*, on the other hand, represents a more conservative model, closer to the Western European pattern, confirming that Slavic languages did not react uniformly to the Biblical anthroponym, but developed different local strategies.

This diversity demonstrates that Slavic adaptation cannot be explained through a single channel. It reflects the intersection of Church Slavonic tradition, Greek liturgical influence, Latin Western influence, local phonological patterns, and derivational models. For this reason, the Slavic material holds the greatest scientific value for the present study.

6.5. Special Focus: The Form Danilo

The form *Danilo* should not be interpreted as a direct continuation of the Hebrew דָּנִיֵּאל. It is a secondary Slavic derivation formed on the basis of the Biblical name *Daniel/Danijel*, through local morphological adaptation. Its development is most likely to be understood within a broader Slavic pattern of adapting Biblical names to endings that were phonologically and morphologically more natural within the Slavic linguistic environment.

The transformation may be represented as follows:

Daniel / Danijel → *Danil-* → *Danilo*

In this process, several developments occur:

1. simplification of the final segment -el
2. formation of the base *Danil-*
3. addition of the final vowel -o
4. integration into the Slavic model of masculine names

The form *Danilo* has parallels in other Slavic adaptations of Biblical names, particularly in *Mihailo* and *Gavrilo*. In both cases, Biblical theophoric names with the ending -el (Michael, Gabriel) develop Slavic forms with -ilo. This demonstrates that *Danilo* is not an isolated or accidental formation, but part of a broader derivational pattern.

At this point, methodological caution is necessary. It should not be claimed that -ilo in *Danilo* is necessarily a productive suffix with a single clear meaning. More precisely, it is appropriate to describe it as a morphological adaptation of the base *Danil-* into a masculine naming pattern ending in -o, by analogy with other Biblical names. This preserves academic precision and avoids overinterpretation.

In relation to the Hebrew original, *Danilo* retains only the initial identifying segment *Dan-* and a general connection with the Biblical name *Daniel*. The theophoric element -el is no longer formally present as an independent ending, but its meaning is not entirely lost, since the name continues to be understood as a variant of the Biblical *Daniel*. This constitutes an important example of the distinction between formal preservation and traditional preservation of meaning.

6.6. The Feminine Form *Danijela*

The feminine form *Danijela* arises secondarily from the masculine form *Danijel*, through the addition of the feminine ending -a. This process corresponds to the general European pattern of feminization of masculine names. In Romance languages, we find *Daniela*; in French, *Danielle*; in English, *Danielle* and *Daniella*; in Slavic languages, *Danijela* or *Daniela*, depending on orthographic and phonetic tradition.

Morphologically, the process is simple:

Daniel / Danijel → *Daniela / Danijela*

Etymologically, however, it is important to emphasize that *Danijela* does not possess an independent Hebrew origin. It is a European feminine derivative of a masculine Biblical name. Its meaning remains tied to the meaning of the original form: “God is my judge.” This meaning is not derived from the feminine suffix, but from the base Biblical name.

In this respect, *Danijela* confirms the capacity of Biblical names to adapt to the grammatical requirements of European languages while preserving their fundamental identity and semantic content. It is a secondary, yet fully legitimate member of the European family of names derived from the Hebrew דָּנִיֵּל אֱלֹהֵי דָּנִיֵּל.

6.7. Concluding Synthesis

The dissemination of the name *Daniel* into Indo-European languages demonstrates several stable principles. First, the name is transmitted through the religious canon, rather than through ordinary linguistic borrowing. Second, Greek and Latin constitute key intermediary stages. Third, European languages respond differently to the same Biblical model: some preserve it almost unchanged (*Daniel*), some adapt it phonologically (*Daniele*), and others develop secondary local forms (*Danilo*, *Daniil*, *Danylo*). Fourth, feminine forms arise as later European derivatives, without breaking the connection with the Hebrew original.

The most important conclusion is that the name *Daniel* exhibits an exceptional capacity to preserve its semantic identity despite formal changes. In Hebrew, it is morphologically transparent; in Greek and Latin, it becomes transliterated; in European languages, it becomes locally adapted. Nevertheless, the core semantic formula “God is my judge” remains stable throughout all stages of transmission.

Footnotes

1. Krašovec, J. (2009) ‘Phonetic Factors in Transliteration of Biblical Proper Names into Greek and Latin’, *Textus*, 24, pp. 15–36.
2. Scheetz, J. (2010) ‘Daniel’s Position in the Tanach, the LXX-Vulgate, and the Protestant Canon’, *Old Testament Essays*, 23(1), pp. 178–193.
3. Krašovec, J. (2009).
4. Hanks, P., Hardcastle, K. and Hodges, F. (2006) *A Dictionary of First Names*. 2nd edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
5. Hanks, P., Coates, R. and McClure, P. (2016) *The Oxford Dictionary of Family Names in Britain and Ireland*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
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13. Fowler, J.D. (1988) *Theophoric Personal Names in Ancient Hebrew*. Sheffield: JSOT Press.
14. Stanojević, Ž. (2026) *Onomastikon biblijskih imena*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18796669>.

7. Semantic Stability Across Languages

One of the most evident and methodologically most significant characteristics of the name *Danijel* (Hebr. דַּנְיֵאל, *Dāniyyēl*) is its exceptional semantic stability across different linguistic and cultural phases of transmission. While the phonological and morphological forms of the name change in accordance with the rules of individual languages, the core meaning — “God is my judge” — remains continuously preserved from the earliest Semitic attestations to contemporary European languages. This stability is not accidental, but represents the result of the specific nature of theophoric names, their function within religious discourse, and the manner of their transmission through canonical texts.¹

Starting from the Hebrew form דַּנְיֵאל (*Dāniyyēl*), the semantic structure of the name is clearly determined by the combination of the root דָּן (*dān*), which denotes the act of judging, and the theophoric element אֵל (*’ēl*), which denotes God. Brown–Driver–Briggs leksikon tumači ime kao „God is my judge“, čime se potvrđuje da je reč o nominalnoj konstrukciji koja funkcioniše kao teološka izjava, a ne samo kao identifikaciona oznaka (Brown, Driver and Briggs 1906). Strongov konkordancijski sistem (H1840) daje identično značenje i povezuje ime direktno sa hebrejskim korenom דָּן, što pokazuje da su klasične leksikografske tradicije jednoglasne u pogledu njegove semantike (Strong 1890).

What is methodologically particularly important is the fact that this meaning is not lost at any stage of transmission. In the Greek form Δανιήλ (*Daniēl*), although phonological adaptation occurs and morphological transparency is lost, the name continues to be interpreted within the same semantic framework. Greek lexicographical sources record a meaning that directly corresponds to the Hebrew original, indicating that semantic content is preserved through interpretative tradition (Mounce n.d.). A similar situation exists in the Latin form *Daniel*, where, despite the absence of immediate morphological analysis for the Latin speaker, the meaning remains accessible through theological and exegetical literature (Tov 2012).²

Contemporary research in Biblical onomastics confirms that theophoric names are particularly resistant to semantic change. Fowler emphasizes that such names are “compact theological statements that are transmitted through generations without loss of their basic meaning”, precisely because they are connected to religious identity and textual authority (Fowler 1988).³ In this sense, the name *Danijel* does not function as an ordinary lexical unit, but as part of a religious system of meaning that is actively maintained through tradition.

Phonetic changes that arise during transmission — such as the reduction of Hebrew *Dāniyyēl* to Greek *Daniēl* or Latin *Daniel* — do not affect the core meaning of the name. The reason for this lies in the fact that, in the case of personal names, meaning is not transmitted exclusively through phonological structure, but through cultural and textual memory. As Hough emphasizes, personal names often function as “cultural markers whose meaning is not dependent on immediate morphological transparency, but on the tradition in which they are used” (Hough 2016).⁴ This observation is particularly applicable to Biblical names, which are continuously reinterpreted through religious practice.

Morphological adaptations in European languages further confirm this principle. In Western European languages, the form *Daniel* remains almost unchanged, while in Romance languages minor modifications occur, as in the Italian *Daniele*. In Slavic languages, however, forms such as

Danijel, *Danilo*, *Daniil*, and *Danylo* develop. Despite these differences, all these forms refer to the same Biblical name and retain its semantic identity.

Particularly significant is the case of the form *Danilo*, which formally no longer contains the visible theophoric element -el. Nevertheless, its meaning is not lost. This confirms that semantic stability does not necessarily depend on the formal preservation of all morphological elements, but rather on the continuity of tradition. In this sense, *Danilo* represents an example in which formal transformation occurs alongside the preservation of meaning through cultural and religious context.

Contemporary onomastic approaches further emphasize this phenomenon. Hanks and collaborators point out that Biblical names are among the most stable in European languages precisely because they are “continuously supported by textual authority and institutional usage” (Hanks, Coates and McClure 2016).⁵ In other words, the meaning of a name does not depend solely on the language in which it is used, but on the system in which it is embedded.

Within this context, one may speak of a dual mechanism of meaning preservation: first, through textual continuity — the name constantly appears in sacred texts, translations, and commentaries; second, through cultural reproduction — the name is transmitted through generations as part of religious and social identity. These two mechanisms together ensure that the meaning of the name *Danijel* remains stable even when its form undergoes significant changes.

In accordance with these findings, Stanojević emphasizes that theophoric names function as „semantički stabilne jedinice koje nadživljavaju fonetske i morfološke transformacije zahvaljujući svojoj ulozi u religijskom diskursu“ (Stanojević 2026).⁶ This formulation precisely describes the phenomenon observable in the name *Danijel*: its meaning remains unchanged not because its form is preserved, but because its function within the cultural and religious system is stable.

In conclusion, the semantic stability of the name *Danijel* may be explained by a combination of several factors: a theophoric structure that carries a clearly defined meaning; continuous presence within the Biblical canon; ongoing interpretation within theological tradition; institutional support through liturgy and education; and cultural reproduction across generations. Despite phonetic changes and morphological adaptations, the name *Danijel* remains semantically unchanged, placing it among the most stable onomastic units within the European linguistic and cultural tradition.

Footnotes

1. Brown, F., Driver, S.R. and Briggs, C.A. (1906) *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Oxford: Clarendon Press; Strong, J. (1890) *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon.

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8. Quantitative and Comparative Analysis

8.1. Quantitative Analysis: Frequency and Distribution of Variants

Quantitative analysis of personal names represents an important methodological tool in contemporary onomastics, as it enables the empirical verification of theoretical assumptions regarding the spread, stability, and adaptation of names across different linguistic and cultural spaces. In the case of the name *Danijel* (Hebr. דָּנִיֵּיֶל, *Dāniyyēl*), quantitative data confirm its exceptionally wide distribution and long-term usage in European languages.¹

Contemporary databases of personal names, including lexicographic sources and national statistics, show that the form *Daniel* is one of the most widespread Biblical anthroponyms in the European and global context (Hanks, Coates and McClure 2016). This distribution is not uniform, but depends on several factors:

- religious traditions (Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox)
- historical translation channels (Latin vs. Greek influence)
- phonological compatibility with local languages
- cultural and historical popularity of the name

In the Western European sphere, the form *Daniel* dominates with minimal variation. Statistical data from the English-speaking world indicate that the name *Daniel* ranks among the most common male personal names in recent decades, particularly in the second half of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century (Hanks et al. 2006).² A similar situation is found in German and French, where the name maintains stable frequency.

In Romance languages, the distribution is similar but exhibits certain phonological differences. In Italian, the form *Daniele* has high frequency, while Spanish and Portuguese retain the form *Daniel*. These data confirm that the Latin model remains dominant, but is adapted to local phonological rules.

In Slavic languages, quantitative analysis shows greater variability. In Serbian, the forms *Danijel* and *Danilo* are present, with their frequency varying depending on historical period and regional

tradition. In Russian, the form *Daniil* (Даниил) dominates in formal usage, while shortened forms frequently appear in everyday speech. The Ukrainian form *Danylo* (Данило) confirms regional adaptation with the ending -o.

This distribution clearly shows that the name *Daniel* develops in the European sphere through two fundamental quantitative models:

1. the stable form model (*Daniel*) — dominant in Germanic and Romance languages
2. the variant adaptation model (*Danijel, Danilo, Daniil, Danylo*) — dominant in Slavic languages

Contemporary onomastic research indicates that such distribution is not accidental, but reflects different historical channels of transmission and local morphological systems (Hough 2016).³ In this sense, quantitative data confirm the qualitative analysis presented in previous chapters: the Latin form dominates in Western Europe, while Slavic languages develop additional variants.

It is important to note that quantitative stability does not imply complete immutability. In certain periods, increases or decreases in name popularity occur, which are linked to cultural, religious, and social factors. However, in the long-term perspective, the name *Daniel* remains among the most stable and widespread Biblical names.

In this context, Stanojević emphasizes that „biblijska imena poput Danijel pokazuju visok stepen distribucione stabilnosti upravo zbog njihove kontinuirane prisutnosti u religijskom i kulturnom diskursu“ (Stanojević 2026).⁴ This observation confirms that quantitative data are not merely statistical indicators, but also indicators of cultural continuity.

8.2. Comparative Table of Forms

Comparative analysis of name forms across different languages enables a systematic overview of its phonological and morphological transformations. The following table presents the basic forms in representative languages:

Language	Form
Hebrew	Dāniyyēl
Greek	Daniēl
Latin	Daniel
Serbian	Danijel / Danilo
Russian	Daniil
Italian	Daniele

Language Form

English Daniel

This table clearly illustrates several key facts:

First, the Hebrew form *Dāniyyēl* represents the point of origin with the highest degree of morphological transparency. Within it, the root *dān*, the possessive suffix *-ī*, and the theophoric element *'ēl* are clearly visible.

Second, the Greek form *Daniēl* represents the first phase of phonological adaptation, in which simplification of the vocalic structure occurs, while the basic consonantal framework is retained.

Third, the Latin form *Daniel* stabilizes the graphic form and becomes the referential model for most European languages.

Fourth, European languages develop different adaptation strategies:

- preservation of the form (*Daniel* in English and German)
- phonological adaptation (*Daniele* in Italian)
- morphological derivation (*Danilo* in Serbian, *Danylo* in Ukrainian)

Fifth, despite these differences, all forms remain recognizable as variants of the same Biblical name.

This comparative perspective confirms the central thesis of this study: the name *Danijel* demonstrates an exceptional capacity for adaptation without loss of identity. Its form changes according to the rules of different languages, but its function and meaning remain stable.

Contemporary linguistic research emphasizes that such cases represent key examples for the study of the relationship between language and culture. Clackson points out that the transmission of lexical units between language families often involves complex processes of adaptation, but that personal names may exhibit greater stability than general vocabulary (Clackson 2011).⁵

In conclusion, quantitative and comparative analysis shows that the name *Danijel* is not only a historical phenomenon, but also a contemporary linguistic and cultural element with wide distribution. Its stability across time and space confirms its importance as one of the most significant Biblical anthroponyms within the European tradition.

9. Discussion

The analysis of the names *Danijel*, *Danilo*, and *Danijela* demonstrates that Biblical personal names should not be viewed merely as isolated lexical units, but as multilayered onomastic

structures that simultaneously belong to language, text, religious tradition, and cultural memory. Precisely in this multilayered nature lies the most important contribution of this study: the name *Danijel* is not simply a “Hebrew name that spread across Europe,” but an example of the long-term transformation of a Semitic theophoric model into the European anthroponymic system.

Classical Hebraistic tradition, represented by the works of Noth, Stamm, Fowler, BDB, and Strong, correctly begins from the internal structure of the Hebrew form דַּנְיֵיִל (Dāniyyēl). Within this structure, the root דָּן (*dān*), the segment נִיִּי (*dān*), the possessive element -י, and the theophoric ending ל (‘*ēl*) are identified. Such analysis confirms the traditional meaning “God is my judge.” However, this study goes further: it does not remain at the level of etymological reconstruction, but demonstrates how this structure behaves once it leaves the Hebrew linguistic system and enters Greek, Latin, and modern European languages.

In this sense, the study both confirms and extends Fowler’s thesis that Hebrew theophoric names are “compact theological statements.” In the case of *Danijel*, this statement did not remain confined to Biblical Hebrew, but became a translinguistic pattern. The form changed, but the theological meaning continued to be transmitted through canon, exegesis, liturgy, and European naming practice. Therefore, the name *Danijel* may be defined as a semantically stable, formally adaptable theophoric anthroponym.

A particularly important part of the discussion concerns the Greek phase. The Septuagintal form Δανιήλ (*Daniēl*) does not represent a translation of meaning, but a transliteration. This means that Greek did not translate the Hebrew phrase “God is my judge,” but transmitted the phonetic form of the name. This confirms Krašovec’s observations on the transliteration of Biblical proper names: translators aimed not at absolute phonetic reconstruction, but at functional recognizability in the target language. Thus, already in the Greek phase, an important principle is established: phonetic reduction does not eliminate onomastic identity.

The Latin phase, through the Vulgate, performs a different function. If Greek enabled the transition from the Semitic to the Hellenistic sphere, Latin enabled European standardization. The form *Daniel* becomes the normative model for a large part of Western Europe. Here, the study aligns with the broader text-critical perspective of Tov, Collins, and Fernández Marcos, demonstrating that a Biblical name is not merely a grammatical form, but part of textual transmission. The name spreads not because it is phonetically simple, but because it is embedded within a canonical text possessing institutional authority.

The most original part of the study lies in the analysis of Slavic forms, particularly *Danilo*. In most Western European languages, the form *Daniel* remains relatively stable. Italian *Daniele* shows local phonological integration through the addition of a final vowel. However, Slavic languages introduce an additional level of morphological processing: *Danijel*, *Daniil*, *Danylo*, *Danilo*. Here, the study introduces an important innovation: the form *Danilo* should not be interpreted as a direct continuation of the Hebrew דַּנְיֵיִל, but as a secondary Slavic adaptation of the Biblical name.

This interpretation is methodologically strong because it avoids two errors. The first would be to claim that *Danilo* derives directly from the Hebrew form without intermediary stages. The

second would be to completely separate *Danilo* from *Daniel*. It is more accurate to state that *Danilo* belongs to the same onomastic chain, but not as a direct phonetic continuation, rather as a local Slavic morphological reshaping of the base *Danil-*. The parallel with *Mihailo* and *Gavrilo* is particularly useful, as it demonstrates a broader Slavic adaptation pattern.

This distinction between formal and traditional continuity represents one of the most important theoretical contributions of the study. Formally, *Danilo* no longer contains the visible theophoric element *-el*. Traditionally, however, it remains connected to *Daniel* and its meaning. In other words, the theophoric element disappears at the level of form, but is preserved in cultural and onomastic memory.

The feminine form *Danijela* further confirms this model. It has no independent Hebrew origin, but arises as a European feminization of the masculine form. This shows that European languages do not passively adopt Biblical names, but actively develop them.

Quantitative and comparative analysis further confirms the central thesis. Two dominant models are observed: the conservative model (*Daniel*) in Germanic and Romance languages, and the variant model (*Danijel*, *Danilo*, *Daniil*, *Danylo*) in Slavic languages.

The key theoretical conclusion may be formulated as follows: the name *Danijel* exhibits high semantic stability and high formal adaptability. This conclusion aligns with the approaches of Hough and Hanks, but provides a concrete philological case study.

10. Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that the names *Danijel*, *Danilo*, and *Danijela* belong to the same deep onomastic chain originating in the Biblical Hebrew form דַּנְיֵיִל (Dāniyyēl), passing through Greek Δανιήλ (*Daniēl*) and Latin *Daniel*, and subsequently branching into various European forms. Their common basis is the Hebrew theophoric meaning “God is my judge.”

The principal conclusions may be summarized as follows:

1. The name *Danijel* has a clearly identifiable Hebrew morphological structure.
2. The Greek form represents transliteration, not translation.
3. The Latin form *Daniel* establishes a normative European model.
4. European languages develop different adaptation strategies.
5. The form *Danilo* represents a Slavic morphological innovation.
6. The feminine form *Danijela* is a European derivative.

The original contribution of this study lies in the proposal of a **model of stratified onomastic transmission**, consisting of five layers:

1. Semitic layer: דַּנְיֵיִל
2. Greek layer: Δανιήλ

3. Latin layer: Daniel
4. European adaptation layer
5. Derivational layer

Final conclusion: *Danijel*, *Danilo*, and *Danijela* are not separate names, but three European outcomes of a single Hebrew theophoric anthroponym.

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