The Definite Article

The definite article ("the") in Biblical Hebrew is a heh ה that is prefixed to nouns and noun-like forms such as adjectives. The vowel of the article varies, depending on the word to which it is prefixed. Hebrew does not have an indefinite article (like the “a” or “an” in English). In the examples below, the definite article is highlighted.

בראשית בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּמַיִם וְאֵת הָאָרֶץ (Genesis 1:1)

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

וַיַרְּא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הָאוֹר כִּי טוֹב; וַיַבְדֵל אֱלֹהִים בֵּין הָאוֹר וּבֵין הַחֹשֶךְ (Genesis 1:4)

God saw the light, that it was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.

וַיֹּאמֶר קַח נָא אֶת בִּנְךָ אֶת יְּחִיָּדְךָ אֲשֶר אָהַבְתָּ אֶת יִׁצְחָק וְלֶךְ לְךָ אֶל אֶרֶץ הַמֹּרִיָּה (Genesis 22:2)

He said: “Take your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah; and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you.”
As the examples illustrate, the definite article has three variants: ה, ה, and ה. Their general distribution is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ה</td>
<td>Most common variant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ה</td>
<td>When the word begins with ה, וה, or ר</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ה</td>
<td>When the word begins with ח or unstressed ה or ל</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Definite Article: Exercises 1 and 2**

**The Definite Article: Exercises 3 and 4**

**Want to Know More?**

1. **Interrogative heh**: Not every heh ה at the beginning of a word is a definite article. In some words heh is just the first consonant of the word, and in others it signifies that the following sentence is a question.

2. **The article and dagesh**: The definite article affects the first consonant of the word to which it is prefixed.

3. **The article and prepositions**: The definite article merges with the prefixed prepositions “in” ב and “to” ל to form a single prefix.