

# Biblical Hebrew Grammar for Beginners

## 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.

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים ; אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ . (Genesis 1:1)

*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*

וַיִּרְא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאֹר כִּי-טוֹב ; וַיַּבְדֵּל אֱלֹהִים בֵּין הָאֹר וּבֵין  
הַחֹשֶׁךְ . (Genesis 1:4)

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

וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הַרְקִיעַ וַיַּבְדֵּל בֵּין הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר מִתַּחַת לַרְקִיעַ וּבֵין  
הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר מֵעַל לַרְקִיעַ ; וַיְהִי-כֵן . (Genesis 1:7)

*God made the vault, and separated the waters which were below the vault from the waters which were above the vault; and it was so.*

וַתוֹצֵא הָאָרֶץ דָּשָׁא עֵשֶׂב מִזְרִיעַ זֶרַע לְמִינֵהוּ וְעֵץ עֹשֶׂה-פְּרִי אֲשֶׁר זֶרְעוֹ-  
בוֹ לְמִינֵהוּ ; וַיִּרְא אֱלֹהִים כִּי-טוֹב . (Genesis 1:12)

*The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit with seeds in them after their kind; and God saw that it was good.*

וַיֹּאמֶר קַח-נָא אֶת-בְּנֶךְ אֶת-יִחִידְךָ אֲשֶׁר-אָהַבְתָּ אֶת-יִצְחָק וְלֶךְ-לְךָ  
אֶל-אֶרֶץ הַמֹּרְיָה ; וְהִעַלְהוּ שָׁם לְעֹלָה עַל אֶחָד הַהָרִים אֲשֶׁר אָמַר  
אֱלֹהִים . (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, הַ, and הֶ. Their general distribution is as follows:

ה	Most common variant	הַמִּים
הַ	When the word begins with א, ע, or א	הַאֲרָץ
הֶ	When the word begins with ב or unstressed ה or ע	הַהַרִים

[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.