English – The definite and indefinite article

Definite = "The"
Indefinite = "A" or "an"

An article, whether definite or indefinite helps the reader or communicator to refer to a noun in either a generic or a specific way.

An indefinite article may refer to something or someone not specifically known or not previously mentioned
" A child was playing"

1) We don't know the child.
2) We don't know the child's name.
3) It is the first mention of this child. If the thought is developed further about this child, the second time it would be proper/acceptable to use the definite article.

"It was a sunny summer morning and a child was playing in the park. The child seemed very content."

"A" can also be used to talk about our profession or position.

"I am a pastor"   "I am a teacher"   "I am a student"

"I am in a difficult situation"

"A" when the noun begins with a consonant.
"An" when the noun begins with a vowel.

*Pronunciation can change this rule

"The" definite article

Use when referring to someone or something specific
Also for proper places and bodies of water

"The United States of America"
"The United Kingdom"

*But not Italy, England ...

"The stone the builders rejected"
"The Word of God"

Sometimes nouns will appear without any article. This
is called anarthrous (very common in Greek)

"People are kind"
"God is merciful"

The Hebrew Article

Hebrew has no indefinite article.

In this lesson our attention will be focused on the definite article.
Most scholars assume that when a Hebrew noun does not have a definite article, it is to be considered indefinite.

Unlike English articles that were 'free standing' (not prefixed or attached to the nouns they were determining)
The Hebrew definite article is prefixed, attached in front of, and directly to the noun it is determining.
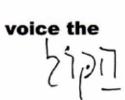
This is how to recognize the definite article

for Example

הַקּוֹל

דָּבָר

הַ ·

heavens the	**word the**	**voice the**
הַשָּׁמַיִם	הַדָּבָר	הַקּוֹל

יָד   yad=hand, a hand   הַיָּד   hay-yad=the hand
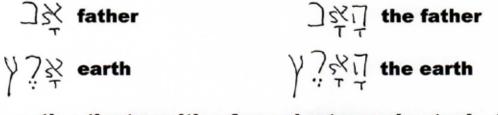
קוֹל   qol=voice, a voice   הַקּוֹל   haq-qol=the voice

When the definite article is prefixed to a noun that begins with a guttural

אָ , ר , ע

The definite article will be modified to compensate because gutturals do not double.
(compensatory lengthening must occur)

אָב father   הָאָב the father

אֶרֶץ earth   הָאָרֶץ the earth

notice the transition from short vowel patach –to qamets (long vowel)   הַ — to הָ

(there are 3 types of compensatory lengthening)
patach הַ to qamets הָ

hireq ִ to tsere ֵ

quibbuts ֻ to holem ֹ

Before ה **and** ח

Definite article will usually be הָ **but without dagesh forte.**

חֶרֶב herev=sword הֶחֶרֶב ha-he-rev=the sword

④

the rejection of dagesh forte is called "virtual doubling"

הֵיכָל palace   הַהֵיכָל the palace

↑

*notice the patach did not lengthen

The definite article with begadkephat letters
"בּ גּ דּ כּ פּ תּ"

I bring this up because it can become a little confusing,
if the first letter of the noun is usually taking a dagesh
forte with the definite article... what do you do the "dot"
Dagesh Lene, In the begadkephat letters?

Nothing in the appearance changes. The Dagesh Lene
has now become a Dagesh Forte.

Irregular seghol vowel

Before חָ   and before unaccented הָ   or unaccented

Or unaccented עָ   the article is written   הֶ ("ה plus ֶ")

For example

הָרִים mountains   הֶהָרִים the mountains

When the definite article appears prefixed to a noun whose initial consonant is י **(YOD) the definite article may be written** הַ

נָאֹר   river   הַיְאֹר   the river

Same rule for מְ

מְלָכִים   kings   הַמְּלָכִים   the kings

In the next few lessons we will learn about prepositions + definite article + noun how the הַ will actually in some cases drop off! We will also learn about definite and indefiniteness in our study – The Hebrew construct chain.