

# KOACH AND GEVURAH: STRENGTH AND RESILIENCE

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My teacher Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks defines Israel as the home of hope. Since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, our lives and our horizons feel very limited. **For me, one of the most challenging things to face about this pandemic is that Israel closed its borders to anyone who isn't a citizen.** Of course it is the right decision for public health. But this is the first time in my lifetime I can't just get on a plane and be in Israel.

Every year, we commemorate Yom HaShoah and then celebrate Yom Ha'atzmaut just a week later, highlighting the resilience of the Jewish people and the transition from the Holocaust to Statehood. Somehow, this pattern seems to mirror the dichotomy of these days we're living in. **In this time of the pandemic, the Jewish people and the world at large will undoubtedly once again go *m'Shoah l'tkumah*, from the depths of despair to the miracle of rebirth.**

This pandemic is one of the first times humanity has confronted a shared enemy, where we're not each other's adversary. Countries around the world are working together to pull humanity through this time. In the future, when the story of how we as a human race climbed out of this abyss, among many other countries, the contribution of Israel will be found to have been pivotal. To get through this time though, we must be strong.

We have two words used for strong people: *koach* and *gevurah*, often translated as strength and heroism. Rabbi Sacks makes a distinction between those two terms. ***Koach* means to be physically strong. *Gevurah* means to be resilient.** Israel, its story of climbing from the catastrophe of the Holocaust and not merely

managing to stitch together a just-about-good-enough country, but to bring about the renewal of the Jewish people in every sense of the word, shows us the importance of *koach* and also of *gevurah*.

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*Gevurah* is the strength we need today. The *gevurah* to be resilient, to carry on dreaming. **No matter how difficult these times are, we need to continue sacrificing to keep ourselves and our neighbors safe.** And as we continue sacrificing, we are in fact demonstrating acts of hope, acts of faith, acts we have seen in our lifetime, in our parents' and grandparents' lifetimes — the promise that from the depths of despair can come the most incredible things that we truly need. We must never stop dreaming and never, ever stop hoping.

