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Excerpted and adapted from a shiur by Rav Moshe Zev Granek

https://baishavaad.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/DEV81_008_Nitzavim_Come_Back_The_Mitzvah_of_Teshuva.mp3

For this mitzvah that I command you today is not concealed from you and it is not far away.

Devarim 30:11

According to many *Rishonim*, including the Ramban and Rabeinu Yonah, “this mitzvah” means the mitzvah to do *teshuvah* for one’s *aveiros*. In their view, the mitzvah includes the entire process of *teshuvah*: *charatah* (regret), *azivas hacheit* (ceasing to commit the sin), *vidui* (confession), and *kabalah al he’asid* (resolving not to do it again). The Rambam (Sefer Hamitzvos Asei 73 and *Hilchos Teshuvah* 1:1) counts reciting *vidui* as a mitzvah but does not include the rest of the *teshuvah* process.

The Meshech Chochmah (in Parshas Vayeilech) questions how the Ramban and Rabeinu Yonah can list *teshuvah* as a mitzvah, given that Chazal teach that *teshuvah* erases *aveiros*. If, for example, someone violated Shabbos intentionally, wouldn’t the prohibition to desecrate Shabbos obligate him to do *teshuvah* to remove the violation? Why the need for a special mitzvah to do *teshuvah*? The Meshech Chochmah suggests that this is the reason that the Rambam does not count *teshuvah* as a mitzvah—it is already included in every mitzvah and *aveirah* in the Torah. Only *vidui* (which the Rambam apparently holds wouldn’t otherwise be mandated) can be a separate mitzvah.

How, then, to explain those *Rishonim* who do count *teshuvah* as a mitzvah? Perhaps they would argue that *teshuvah*’s power to erase *aveiros* exists only because *teshuvah* is a separate mitzvah.