



ELUL • 30 DAYS OF RETURN

A Guided Journal for the Journey Toward Rosh Hashanah

Rabbi-Cantor Gastón Bogomolni



Welcome to the Month of Elul

Elul is the final month of the Jewish year - a sacred corridor leading toward Rosh Hashanah and the Days of Awe. Jewish tradition invites us to hear the shofar, examine our lives, repair what we can, and return to the people we are called to become.

Teshuvah is often translated as repentance, but its root means return. This journal is not an invitation to perfection or self-punishment. It is a practice of courageous return: to truth, to relationship, to the Divine, and to your own deepest soul.

A Simple Daily Rhythm

ARRIVE Take three slow breaths. Let yourself become present.

LEARN Read the short teaching without rushing.

REFLECT Respond honestly to the prompts that speak to you.

PRACTICE Carry the suggested action into your day.

CLOSE Read the intention aloud, or write your own.

There is no single correct way to use these pages. Write a few lines or many. Return to a prompt later. Skip what does not serve you. The goal is not to complete a perfect journal; the goal is to enter the new year more awake.

The Journey of the Thirty Days

DAYS 1-7

AWAKEN

Presence, listening, honest attention, and compassion

DAYS 8-14

SEE CLEARLY

Truth, patterns, values, grief, and release

DAYS 15-22

REPAIR

Forgiveness, boundaries, courage, gratitude, and enoughness

DAYS 23-30

RENEW

Relationships, joy, purpose, vision, prayer, awe, and beginning again

My intention for this Elul

DAY
1

Wake Up

Rabbi-Cantor Gastón Bogomolni



Ani L'dodi v'dodi li - I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine.

Elul begins with awakening. The shofar is not an alarm of panic, but a call to presence: your life is happening now, and you are invited to meet it with an open heart.

REFLECT

1. Where in my life have I been moving on autopilot?
2. What is asking for my full attention now?
3. If I truly believed I was beloved, what would I approach differently?

WRITE

TODAY'S PRACTICE Pause three times today. Take one slow breath and quietly say: Hineni - I am here.

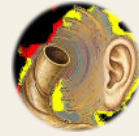
KAVANAH • INTENTION

“Today, I choose to be present.”

DAY
2

Listen for the Shofar

Rabbi-Cantor Gastón Bogomolni



Awake, sleepers, from your sleep. - Maimonides, Hilchot Teshuvah 3:4

The shofar bypasses explanation. Its broken and whole sounds ask us to listen beneath our defenses, schedules, and familiar stories.

REFLECT

1. What truth have I been avoiding?
2. What does my inner voice repeat when everything becomes quiet?
3. Which sound describes my soul today: whole, broken, or trembling?
Why?

WRITE

TODAY'S PRACTICE Sit in silence for five minutes. Notice what arises without fixing or judging it.

KAVANAH • INTENTION

“May I hear what my soul is ready to tell me.”

DAY
3

Take a Soul-Account

Rabbi-Cantor Gastón Bogomolni



Let us search and examine our ways, and return. - Lamentations 3:40

Cheshbon hanefesh, an accounting of the soul, is not a trial. It is a compassionate inventory of what gives life, what drains it, and what needs to change.

REFLECT

1. What am I proud of from this past year?
2. Where did I act out of alignment with my values?
3. What pattern has cost me peace or connection?

WRITE

TODAY'S PRACTICE Draw two columns: What I want to carry forward / What I am ready to release.

KAVANAH • INTENTION

“I can look honestly at my life without abandoning myself.”

DAY
4

Return to Your Center

Rabbi-Cantor Gastón Bogomolni



Return, Israel, to the Eternal your God. - Hosea 14:2

Teshuvah means return. Before it means correcting behavior, it means returning to the deepest self - the part of us still connected to the Divine image.

REFLECT

1. When do I feel most like my truest self?
2. What pulls me away from my center?
3. What would returning look like in one area of my life?

WRITE

TODAY'S PRACTICE Place a hand over your heart. Breathe slowly and repeat: I am returning.

KAVANAH • INTENTION

“The path home begins beneath my feet.”

DAY
5

Remember Your Divine Spark

Rabbi-Cantor Gastón Bogomolni



The soul of the human is the lamp of the Eternal. - Proverbs 20:27

Jewish tradition teaches that the soul carries a sacred light. Mistakes may conceal that light, but they do not extinguish it.

REFLECT

1. Which qualities in me reflect Divine light?
2. Where have I confused a mistake with my identity?
3. Whose inner light do I need to recognize more clearly?

WRITE

TODAY'S PRACTICE Name three strengths that helped you survive or grow this year.

KAVANAH • INTENTION

“My light remains, even when it is hidden.”

DAY
6

Meet Yourself with Compassion

Rabbi-Cantor Gastón Bogomolni



The Eternal is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in love. - Exodus 34:6

Accountability without compassion becomes shame; compassion without accountability becomes avoidance. Teshuvah asks for both tenderness and truth.

REFLECT

1. How do I speak to myself when I fail?
2. What would a compassionate but honest response sound like?
3. What do I need in order to take responsibility without collapsing into shame?

WRITE

TODAY'S PRACTICE Rewrite one harsh self-judgment as a truthful, compassionate statement.

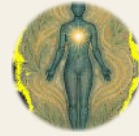
KAVANAH • INTENTION

“I will tell myself the truth with love.”

DAY
7

Honor the Body

Rabbi-Cantor Gastón Bogomolni



Your body is a vessel through which your soul serves.

The body records our rushing, grief, fear, joy, and resilience. Listening to it can become a form of spiritual attention.

REFLECT

1. Where does my body hold tension?
2. What has my body been asking for?
3. Which habit would help me treat my body as sacred?

WRITE

TODAY'S PRACTICE Do a slow body scan from head to feet. Offer gratitude to each area you notice.

KAVANAH • INTENTION

“May I inhabit my body with kindness.”

DAY
8

Name What Is True

Rabbi-Cantor Gastón Bogomolni



Truth springs up from the earth. - Psalms 85:12

Healing begins when reality is named. Truth need not be weaponized; it can be spoken with humility, precision, and care.

REFLECT

1. What truth about this year is difficult to admit?
2. What story have I told to protect myself?
3. What becomes possible when I name reality clearly?

WRITE

TODAY'S PRACTICE Complete the sentence ten times: The truth I am ready to acknowledge is...

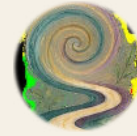
KAVANAH • INTENTION

“Truth can be a doorway, not a punishment.”

DAY
9

Notice Your Patterns

Rabbi-Cantor Gastón Bogomolni



A person should always examine their actions. - Talmud, Eruvin 13b

Our reactions often reveal old protective patterns. Noticing the space between trigger and response gives us freedom to choose again.

REFLECT

1. Which situation repeatedly activates me?
2. What do I fear or assume in that moment?
3. What wiser response could I practice next time?

WRITE

TODAY'S PRACTICE Map one recent moment: Trigger / Interpretation / Feeling / Reaction / New choice.

KAVANAH • INTENTION

“Awareness creates room for choice.”

DAY
10

Clarify Your Values

Rabbi-Cantor Gastón Bogomolni



What does the Eternal require of you? To do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly. - Micah 6:8

Values are our inner compass. The work of Elul is to close the distance between what we say matters and how we actually live.

REFLECT

1. Which five values matter most to me?
2. Where did my calendar or spending reflect those values?
3. Where was there a gap between intention and action?

WRITE

TODAY'S PRACTICE Choose one value and schedule one concrete action that expresses it.

KAVANAH • INTENTION

“May my choices reveal what I truly value.”

DAY
11

Practice Humility

Rabbi-Cantor Gastón Bogomolni



Moses was very humble, more than any person on earth. - Numbers 12:3

Anavah, humility, is not becoming small. It is taking up the right amount of space - neither disappearing nor making everything about ourselves.

REFLECT

1. Where do I take up too much space?
2. Where do I make myself smaller than I am?
3. What would the right-sized response look like?

WRITE

TODAY'S PRACTICE In one conversation today, practice listening without preparing your reply.

KAVANAH • INTENTION

“I have nothing to prove and something to learn.”

DAY
12

Repair Through Words

Rabbi-Cantor Gastón Bogomolni



Death and life are in the power of the tongue. - Proverbs 18:21

Words create worlds. Elul invites us to notice speech that healed, speech that harmed, and silence that should have become speech.

REFLECT

1. Which words of mine brought life this year?
2. Which words caused harm or distance?
3. What conversation have I postponed?

WRITE

TODAY'S PRACTICE Offer one sincere word of appreciation without adding advice or correction.

KAVANAH • INTENTION

“May my words be truthful, necessary, and kind.”

DAY
13

Make Space for Grief

Rabbi-Cantor Gastón Bogomolni



Those who sow in tears will reap in joy. - Psalms 126:5

Not every loss can be repaired. Some must be mourned. Grief is not a failure of faith; it is love learning to live with absence and change.

REFLECT

1. What loss from this year needs acknowledgment?
2. What did that loss reveal about what I love?
3. What support or ritual would help me carry it?

WRITE

TODAY'S PRACTICE Light a candle or sit beside a window. Name what was lost and what remains.

KAVANAH • INTENTION

“My tears, too, belong in sacred space.”

DAY
14

Release What No Longer Serves

Rabbi-Cantor Gastón Bogomolni



Cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. - Micah 7:19

Release does not erase history. It loosens the grip of a habit, identity, resentment, or expectation that no longer serves life.

REFLECT

1. What am I carrying beyond its season?
2. What purpose did it once serve?
3. Who might I become if I released it?

WRITE

TODAY'S PRACTICE Write one thing you are ready to release.
Tear or fold the paper and set it aside.

KAVANAH • INTENTION

“I bless what protected me, and I choose a new way.”

DAY
15

Ask for Forgiveness

Rabbi-Cantor Gastón Bogomolni



For wrongs between people, the day does not atone until one has appeased the other. - Mishnah Yoma 8:9

A genuine apology names the harm, takes responsibility, expresses remorse, and commits to different behavior. It does not demand immediate forgiveness.

REFLECT

1. Whom have I harmed, intentionally or unintentionally?
2. What impact might my actions have had on them?
3. What repair can I offer without defending myself?

WRITE

TODAY'S PRACTICE Draft an apology using: I did... I understand it may have... I am sorry... I will...

KAVANAH • INTENTION

“Give me courage to repair what I can.”

DAY
16

Open to Forgiveness

Rabbi-Cantor Gastón Bogomolni



You are not obligated to reconcile where there is ongoing harm.

Forgiveness can be a gradual release of vengeance or emotional captivity. It does not require forgetting, excusing, or restoring unsafe access.

REFLECT

1. What hurt am I still carrying?
2. What boundary is needed before release is possible?
3. What might forgiveness mean for me - and what does it not mean?

WRITE

TODAY'S PRACTICE Imagine placing the burden outside yourself for one minute. Notice what changes.

KAVANAH • INTENTION

"I release at the pace of truth and safety."

DAY
17

Repair a Relationship

Rabbi-Cantor Gastón Bogomolni



All Israel is responsible for one another. - Talmud, Shevuot 39a

Relationships rarely heal through intention alone. Repair grows through curiosity, accountability, boundaries, and repeated trustworthy action.

REFLECT

1. Which relationship most needs care?
2. What is mine to own, and what is not mine?
3. What small action could reopen connection?

WRITE

TODAY'S PRACTICE Send a message that begins: I have been thinking about our relationship, and I would value...

KAVANAH • INTENTION

“May I seek connection without abandoning truth.”

DAY
18

Set Sacred Boundaries

Rabbi-Cantor Gastón Bogomolni



If I am not for myself, who will be for me? - Pirkei Avot 1:14

A boundary protects what is sacred. It clarifies what we will participate in, what we will decline, and how we will care for ourselves and others.

REFLECT

1. Where do I say yes while feeling no?
2. Which boundary would protect my peace or integrity?
3. How can I express it clearly without punishment or apology?

WRITE

TODAY'S PRACTICE Practice one sentence: I am not available for that, but I can offer...

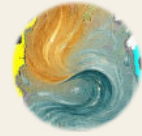
KAVANAH • INTENTION

“My boundaries can be both firm and compassionate.”

DAY
19

Transform Anger

Rabbi-Cantor Gastón Bogomolni



Be slow to anger and easy to appease. - Pirkei Avot 5:11

Anger often guards a wound, value, or unmet need. Its energy can illuminate what matters, but it needs direction so it does not become destruction.

REFLECT

1. What lies beneath my anger: fear, hurt, shame, or powerlessness?
2. Which value or need is my anger protecting?
3. How can I express that need without causing harm?

WRITE

TODAY'S PRACTICE Before responding to irritation today, take six slow breaths and name the need underneath.

KAVANAH • INTENTION

“I can honor the message without obeying the impulse.”

DAY
20

Choose Courage

Rabbi-Cantor Gastón Bogomolni



Be strong and courageous; do not be afraid. - Deuteronomy 31:6

Courage is not the absence of fear. It is the willingness to move toward what matters while fear travels with us.

REFLECT

1. What am I afraid to begin, end, say, or admit?
2. What value makes this risk worth taking?
3. What is the smallest courageous next step?

WRITE

TODAY'S PRACTICE Take one action today that lasts less than ten minutes but moves you toward courage.

KAVANAH • INTENTION

“I do not need to feel ready to take one faithful step.”

DAY
21

Practice Gratitude

Rabbi-Cantor Gastón Bogomolni



It is good to give thanks to the Eternal. - Psalms 92:2

Gratitude does not deny pain. It expands our field of vision so difficulty is not the only truth we can see.

REFLECT

1. What ordinary blessing sustained me this year?
2. Who deserves thanks they have not yet received?
3. What challenge also carried an unexpected gift?

WRITE

TODAY'S PRACTICE Name five specific blessings, including one you usually overlook.

KAVANAH • INTENTION

“Thankfulness makes room for wonder.”

DAY
22

Notice Enoughness

Rabbi-Cantor Gastón Bogomolni



Who is rich? One who rejoices in their portion. - Pirkei Avot 4:1

Contentment is not resignation. It is the ability to recognize sufficiency even while working toward change.

REFLECT

1. Where does comparison steal my peace?
2. What in my life is already enough?
3. What desire is truly mine, and what desire came from external pressure?

WRITE

TODAY'S PRACTICE Take a one-day break from one source of comparison.

KAVANAH • INTENTION

"I can desire growth without despising what is."

DAY
23

Renew Your Relationships

Rabbi-Cantor Gastón Bogomolni



Love your neighbor as yourself. - Leviticus 19:18

The new year is shaped not only by private intentions but by how we show up for people. Love becomes real through attention, reliability, and care.

REFLECT

1. Who helped carry me this year?
2. Who might need more of my presence?
3. How do I want people to feel after spending time with me?

WRITE

TODAY'S PRACTICE Contact someone simply to ask how they are, then listen.

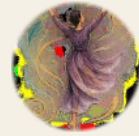
KAVANAH • INTENTION

“May my presence become a blessing.”

DAY
24

Rediscover Joy

Rabbi-Cantor Gastón Bogomolni



Serve the Eternal with joy. - Psalms 100:2

Joy is not frivolous; it restores energy for sacred work. Elul asks not only what we regret, but what makes us more alive.

REFLECT

1. When did I feel most alive this year?
2. What has crowded joy out of my life?
3. What form of delight reconnects me with the sacred?

WRITE

TODAY'S PRACTICE Choose one small, guilt-free act of joy today.

KAVANAH • INTENTION

“Joy is part of my return.”

DAY
25

Live Your Purpose

Rabbi-Cantor Gastón Bogomolni



For my sake the world was created. - Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5

Purpose is rarely one grand assignment. It emerges where our gifts, responsibilities, relationships, and the needs of the moment meet.

REFLECT

1. Which gifts am I responsible for using?
2. Where does the world around me need what I can offer?
3. What meaningful work is mine in this season?

WRITE

TODAY'S PRACTICE Write a one-sentence purpose statement beginning: In this season, I am here to...

KAVANAH • INTENTION

"I will offer what is uniquely mine to give."

DAY
26

Envision the Year Ahead

Rabbi-Cantor Gastón Bogomolni



Where there is no vision, the people become unrestrained. - Proverbs 29:18

A Jewish vision of the future is not control; it is direction. We imagine who we hope to become and then practice that identity through small choices.

REFLECT

1. At next Rosh Hashanah, what do I hope will be different?
2. How do I want to have grown spiritually and relationally?
3. Which three words will guide my year?

WRITE

TODAY'S PRACTICE Write a short letter dated one year from today, describing the growth you are celebrating.

KAVANAH • INTENTION

“I face the future with intention and openness.”

DAY
27

Choose One Change

Rabbi-Cantor Gastón Bogomolni



*It is not your duty to finish the work, but neither are you free to neglect it. -
Pirkei Avot 2:16*

Transformation becomes sustainable when it is specific and small enough to practice. One faithful change can reorganize an entire life.

REFLECT

1. Which change would create the greatest positive ripple?
2. What obstacle will predictably arise?
3. What support, cue, or structure will help me continue?

WRITE

TODAY'S PRACTICE Define your change: After I..., I will..., for..., and I will review it on...

KAVANAH • INTENTION

“Small, consistent acts can become a new path.”

DAY
28

Write Your Prayer

Rabbi-Cantor Gastón Bogomolni



The Eternal is near to all who call in truth. - Psalms 145:18

Prayer can hold what analysis cannot: longing, gratitude, fear, protest, surrender, and hope. No polished language is required.

REFLECT

1. What am I asking for as the year turns?
2. What am I grateful for?
3. What do I need help releasing or becoming?

WRITE

TODAY'S PRACTICE Write directly to God, to the Source of Life, or to your deepest wisdom. Do not edit yourself.

KAVANAH • INTENTION

“May my honest heart become my prayer.”

DAY
29

Stand Before the Mystery

Rabbi-Cantor Gastón Bogomolni



The whole world is filled with Divine glory. - Isaiah 6:3

Rosh Hashanah calls us to humility before a reality larger than ourselves. Awe, yirah, is the trembling awareness that life is precious and our choices matter.

REFLECT

1. What fills me with awe?
2. Where have I treated life as ordinary or guaranteed?
3. What becomes sacred when I pay full attention?

WRITE

TODAY'S PRACTICE Step outside and spend five minutes noticing the sky, light, wind, or living world.

KAVANAH • INTENTION

“I am part of a mystery larger than I can name.”

DAY
30

Cross the Threshold

Rabbi-Cantor Gastón Bogomolni



This day the world is born. - Rosh Hashanah liturgy

You arrive at the threshold carrying honesty, repair, longing, and hope. The work is unfinished, as all living work is. Still, you may enter the new year awake.

REFLECT

1. What am I leaving at the doorway of the old year?
2. What blessing do I carry into the new year?
3. Who do I choose to be when the shofar sounds?

WRITE

TODAY'S PRACTICE Read your entries from Days 1, 10, 20, and today. Circle one sentence that will guide you forward.

KAVANAH • INTENTION

“Hineni. I am here. I am ready to begin again.”

A Blessing for the New Year

May the sound of the shofar awaken what has been sleeping within you.

May you have the courage to see clearly, the humility to repair what you can, and the wisdom to release what you cannot carry forward.

May you recognize the Divine image in yourself and in every person you encounter. May your words bring life, your boundaries protect what is sacred, and your presence become a blessing.

May the coming year bring healing where there has been pain, connection where there has been distance, purpose where there has been uncertainty, and joy that is deep enough to hold the whole of life.

May you be written and sealed for a good, sweet, meaningful, and peaceful year.

L'shanah tovah tikatevu v'techatemu