Leader's Helpful Hints

To Building A Welcoming Community

- **Welcoming Remarks:** Remember that high holiday services may be a students first introduction to Hillel as well as their first time celebrating a holiday away from home. Feeling welcomed is a large part of whether a student will come back. Therefore, be sure to have welcoming remarks incorporated into your service. Keep in mind that many students enter at different points throughout the service. If students arrive late, be sure to have welcoming remarks often.

- **Community Traditions:** Many students are used to their own communities traditions and minhagim (customs). Because of this, it is important to note that each community is unique. Clarify the traditions during the service. For example, communities have different tunes for the most common prayers. When the congregation stands and sits may depend on the local custom. Another suggestion is to mention, " We are all needed to help shape our community's traditions". This has the potential to make students feel included.

- **Prayer and service explanation:** Keep in mind that some students are not acquainted with high holiday prayers, service structure, and may not have a basic understanding of the meaning of the high holidays. Brief explanations of critical prayers should be incorporated into the service. Also, students should leave with an understanding of the different parts of the service

  Rosh Hashana: Evening=Ma'ariv
  Morning=Shacharit (includes the Torah reading and the Haftorah reading of the Prophets)+ Musaf (literally additional)
  Afternoon=Mincha

  Yom Kippur: Evening=Ma'ariv
  Morning: Shacharit (includes the Torah reading and the Haftorah reading of the Prophets) + Musaf (includes Avodah (Temple Service) the Martyrology

Afternoon service= Mincha
Twilight service=Ne'ilah

- **Page numbers:** Announcing page numbers and service sections often will help those not familiar with the service to be able to follow along and not feel lost.

- **Announce Prayers:** It will be helpful for students to hear when prayers are beginning and where on the page they are located. This will be especially useful when reading from different book editions or when there is no transliteration.

- **Remember your audience:** D'var Torahs should be given on topics that students can relate to. The message should be brought back to fit into their everyday lives. Be aware that just as certain topics will speak to students others will turn them off. It is best to avoid taking positions or speaking on topics which may alienate some students such as politics.

  Some topics:
  Can people change?
  The liberating dimension of forgiveness
  Can external actions change a person?
  Lessons from the "Binding of Isaac"
  Hannah, Hagar & Sarah: The women of Rosh Hashanah

- **Thought provoking questions:** Students are accustomed to attending classes in lecture format. The high holidays should offer them something different from their everyday routine. Thought provoking questions seamlessly interjected throughout the service will give students the opportunity to be challenged and really make them think. This would give an opportunity for student involvement in the service by both creating the questions as well as asking them during the service.

The prayer "Unetaneh Tokef" claims that God knows who will live and who will die. How do we relate to this prayer?

The martyrology gives a condensed version of some of the most powerful stories of the Talmud. Take a story of one of the martyrs and render it in full, so that people pay attention to this part of the service.

As we pray for forgiveness, how do we wish to be different once this season of introspection is over? What are we going to do to symbolize the fact we have indeed changed?

How many believe in self-fulfilling prophecy? Can prayer be understood in this way?
When we read the confessions on Yom Kippur, we read them in the plural. This assumes that somebody in the community needs to be forgiven for this particular sin. Do you feel responsible for someone else's wrongdoing? Imagine a society where that would be the normal response.

- **Flow of Service:** Even the best services can have a glitch in them. To try an increase the flow and smoothness of your service have a list of Alyiot and make sure these people are well aware of their part in the service.