HISTORY AND MEANING
The 19th of Kislev, an important holiday in the Chassidic tradition, is regarded as the “Chassidic Rosh Hashanah.” It commemorates the day on which Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, the Alter Rabbi, was released from imprisonment by the Tsar of Russia. Zalman had been in prison under false treason charges, and his release is regarded as the moment when his teachings of Chabad were elevated from mysticism to a proper religious practice in the eyes of the people. It is a day often celebrated with religious debate and study, as well as taking on resolutions of spiritual improvement in the coming year.

TYPICAL OBSERVANCES
• The holiday is celebrated by holding farbrengens, a Chabad event which involves discussion of the Torah and Chassidic stories with traditional music and refreshments.
• As this birth of the Chabad tradition is regarded as the beginning of their year, it is customary for those observing to take on resolutions to improve their spiritual character in the coming year.

TIPS FOR SUPPORTING THE VANDERBILT COMMUNITY
• Communication is key. Ask how you can support observances.
• Students are not automatically excused from class for this holiday. Graduate and professional students must refer to their own school and departmental vacation policies and calendar for more specific information.
• Staff members may request paid time off to celebrate. Support their preference to take leave for their religious observance.

RESOURCES FOR MANAGING WELL-BEING AND MENTAL HEALTH
People feel many types of emotions during the holidays—joy, peace, stress and depression, to name a few. Whatever you feel, know you are not alone, and Vanderbilt has resources to help you through these challenges.

Faculty, Staff and Postdocs
Work/Life Connections-EAP
(615) 936-1327
vumc.org/health-wellness/work-life

Students
Office of Student Care Coordination
(615) 343-9355
vanderbilt.edu/carecoordination

This resource is part of a toolkit created by Equity, Diversity and Inclusion to highlight religious and cultural observances that members of our community may practice. This toolkit is not meant to be exhaustive, but instead to provide a general overview of how we can support staff, faculty and students. We continually refine this information and welcome your suggestions.

For more information or to provide feedback, contact Equity, Diversity and Inclusion at edi@vanderbilt.edu. For information on the university’s policy on religious holy days and observances, contact the Office of the University Chaplain and Religious Life at religiouslife@vanderbilt.edu or Human Resources at human.resources@vanderbilt.edu.