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The Maccabees rose up against their oppressors, attained *freedom*, and reinstated the Temple's holy service. There was oil for only one day but *miraculously* it provided eight days of light.

This story contradicts a strictly rational world view. You might think I'm referring to the miracle of the oil. But the truly irrational element in the Hanukkah story is *freedom*. There is a very compelling contemporary philosophic and scientific argument that freedom doesn't exist. The argument says that everything we think and feel is encoded in the *material* processes happening in our brains. And these material processes mechanistically follow the laws of nature. Freedom makes no sense. However, we may reasonably object: even while the logic of that argument is solid, here, *inside my head*, I experience myself as *free*, whether that makes sense or not! But how can it both be true that freedom can't exist, because matter - including our bodies and brains - simply follows the mechanistic laws of nature, and that freedom does exist, as in our subjective experience?

Rabbi Joseph Gikatilla in his thirteenth century work, *Sha'arei Orah* ("The Gates of Light"), teaches that Hanukkah reveals something about this paradox of freedom. He distinguishes between two aspects of reality. There is a material aspect which mechanistically follows the fixed laws of nature. But this is the external shell of a deeper, inner aspect of reality characterized by personality and freedom. When we look at the world and ourselves *from the outside*, through the rational prism of science, we see no room for freedom in material reality. But when we look *from the inside*, through the prism of our subjective experience, we see freedom. This mystery of the duality of inside and outside, mind and body, is revealed in the miracle of the menorah's oil.

The menorah's body symbolizes the mechanistic external shell of material reality. The oil's light symbolizes the freedom we experience inside our minds. But what about our problem above: how can reality be both mind and body, free and not free? The answer is that it cannot. It makes no sense. Freedom is something *that we have* but which, rationally speaking, *cannot exist*. Hanukkah teaches that freedom, the oil's light, contradicts and transcends the laws of material reality - it is truly *miraculous*. And thus Hanukkah is about giving thanks for a *real miracle* - the miracle of freedom.