

**VAYECH - 5770**  
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In the blessing to Yehuda, Yaakov states: “A lion cub is Yehuda; from the prey, my son, you elevated yourself. (49:9)

The Midrash interprets the first part of the pasuk (Bereishit Rabba 97:9) that Yaakov was sending a message to Yehuda, who is compared to a lion, that he suspected Yehuda of being responsible for Yosef’s death. However, in the second part (you elevated yourself) Yaakov is praising Yosef for being the driving force behind Yosef’s rescue.

After the brothers agreed to kill Yosef, Yehuda states: “Mah Betzah...” “what profit is there in killing our brother..., Come let us sell him to the Yishmaelim”(37:26). If Yehuda was interested in saving Yosef, why was it necessary to sell him rather than just give him away? It appears from the simple reading of the text that Yehuda was just motivated in making a profit rather than in rescuing Yosef. If so, why did Yaakov see fit to praise Yehuda for his role in the incident?

I once heard from Rabbi Zweig, that Yaakov understood, and is teaching us a powerful lesson in human nature. If a person is given something gratis, he will not guard it as carefully as he would if he had paid for it. If we don’t have to spend money on an object our appreciation for it is diminished. Yehuda convinced his brothers that Yosef’s becoming a slave was tantamount to a death sentence. However, Yehuda wanted to insure that Yosef would be treated well as a slave. Giving Yosef away for free would not have accomplished this. If those acquiring him did not spend a significant amount sum for the purchase, they would not have considered his loss or mistreatment to be noteworthy. Therefore, Yehuda attached a price to Yosef’s sale, ensuring that his buyers would consider him an object that has value and is in their best interest to preserve. Yaakov considered these actions worthy of praise.