

**“And he saw an Egyptian man striking a Hebrew man...He turned this way and that and saw that there was no man...He went out the next day and behold! two Hebrew men were fighting...and he thought, ‘Indeed, the matter is known.’”
(2:11-14)**

Horav Azariah Figu, z.l., says that Moshe *Rabbeinu*’s first impression of his Jewish brethren worried him. He went out and saw an Egyptian beating a Jew. His first reaction was to look around to see if there were any other Jews around to help. He was shocked to see that *ein ish*, “there was no man.” There were Jews, but they did not seem to want to become involved – or perhaps they did not care. Moshe could not believe this sense of indifference to the plight of another Jew. He attributed their lack of involvement to the fact that Jews shied away from controversy. If Jewish men saw any type of dispute brewing, they would immediately leave. They stayed away from the fight between the Egyptian and the Jew, because they stayed away from fights – period. While they were certainly wrong, this principle at least provided Moshe with a justification for the Jews’ inaction.

The next day, however, Moshe was confronted with an anomaly that refuted his prior understanding of the community. He saw two Jews quarrelling with one another. “Jewish people fighting with one another? How could this be?” wondered Moshe. He then realized, “Indeed, the matter is [now] known.” Regrettably, the problem confronting the Jewish People was their moral hypocrisy. When a Jew was struck by an Egyptian, they cowered in indifference. “We are not permitted to use force,” they claimed. This might have been negotiable had it been true. It seems, however, that when Jew was fighting Jew, the rules changed. They rained blow upon blow upon each other, as those very same people whose righteous indignation did not permit them to interfere forcibly when their brother was being beaten by an Egyptian demonstrated no moral reluctance in beating a Jew, when the antagonist was another Jew. It is truly unfortunate that this anomaly has not changed with time. What a sad commentary on Jewish life, when brothers exhibit a more positive attitude to the outside world than they display towards each other.