

May One Cancel a Plumber While He Is On His Way Over?

By Rav Eliezer Cohen

Question: Someone calls a plumber to make a repair in his home. A short while later, the plumber calls back and says that he is in his car on the way over, and will be there in about ten minutes. During those few minutes, the homeowner decides that he can do the job on his own. Is he allowed to call the plumber and cancel on him?

Answer: Once a worker begins doing a job, the employer may not terminate him. If he does, he is obligated to pay him in full.

When a worker starts traveling to the job site, he is halachically considered to have begun the job; therefore, the employer would not be permitted to back out on him once he took to the road and, if he does, he would be responsible to pay him for the full job.

If the worker is only coming to give an estimate, that is not considered as if he began working, and the employer would be allowed to back out; however, if he is traveling to start working on the job, it is as if he has already begun to work and the homeowner would not be permitted to cancel on him.

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