158204 - What to Do If You Make a Mistake in Recitation in Prayer?

the question

When I am reciting surahs during prayer sometimes I make a mistake or forget because Im not concentrating, then I say 'AstighfirAllah three times and then start the surah again or start the verse again. Is this correct? Or should I start a new surah?

Summary of answer

1. If you err or forget something while reciting Al-Fatihah, you have to correct it because the prayer for the one who does not recite Al-Fatihah is invalid.
2. If you make a mistake when reciting the Surah after Al-Fatihah or you forget anything of it, it is not prescribed for you to say Istighfar; rather you should try to correct the mistake and remember what you forgot, but if you cannot do that then you may move on to the verse after it, or leave this Surah and start reciting another, or you may bow. If you do any of these things, there is nothing wrong with that.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

If a person forgets something in his recitation or makes a mistake in it while praying, if it is in Al-Fatihah then he has to correct his recitation, because there is no prayer for the one who does not recite it (Al-Fatihah). If he forgets something or makes a mistake in it that changes the meaning, his prayer is not valid until he corrects it.

If the mistake is not in Al-Fatihah , then his prayer is valid, because recitation after Al-Fatihah is Sunnah and is not obligatory.

The scholars of the Standing Committee for Issuing Fatwas stated:

“If a person forgets the Surah after Al-Fatihah , he does not have to do anything further, whether he is leading the prayer, praying behind an Imam or praying on his own, and whether the prayer is obligatory or optional. This is according to the more correct of the two scholarly opinions." (Fatawa Al-Lajnah Ad-Da’imah, 7/146)

If a person makes a mistake when reciting the Surah or he forgets anything of it, it is not prescribed for him to say Istighfar (asking for forgiveness); rather he should try to correct the mistake and remember what he forgot, but if he cannot do that then he may move on to the verse that comes after it, or he may leave this Surah and start reciting another, or he may bow. If he does any of these things, there is nothing wrong with that.

The scholars of the Standing Committee for Issuing Fatwas stated:

“If the worshipper becomes confused when reciting a verse and he cannot remember it, there is no reason why he cannot recite the following verse, but it is prescribed for him not to recite in prayer anything but that which he has memorised well, so that he will not get confused a great deal." (Fatawa Al-Lajnah Ad-Da’imah, 5/337)

Shaykh Ibn Baz (may Allah have mercy on him) was asked:

If the Imam recites in prayer what he can of the Quran, then he forgets the end of the verse, and none of the worshippers behind him knows it, so they cannot prompt him, should he say Takbir and bow, or should he recite another Surah?

He replied:

“He has the choice: if he wishes he may end the recitation and say Takbir or if he wishes he may recite a verse or verses from another Surah, so long as that is not in Al-Fatihah. In the case of Al-Fatihah, it is essential to recite it in full, because reciting it is one of the pillars or essential parts of the prayer.” (Majmu` Fatawa Ibn Baz, 12/129)

Shaykh Ibn `Uthaymin (may Allah have mercy on him) was asked:

If I am praying on my own and I make a mistake in the recitation of the verse, and I am not able to complete it and I am confusing it with another verse, what should I do when I am praying?

He replied:

“You can do one of two things: you can either move on to the verse that follows it, or you can bow, because the matter in this case is broad in scope.” (Fatawa Nur `ala Ad-Darb, 24/141)

And Allah knows best.