99303 - The imam sat briefly after the third rak’ah and the people praying behind him alerted him to that; should he do the prostration of forgetfulness?

the question

In a prayer consists of four raka’at, the imam forgot and sat for a little while after the third raka’ah for tashahhud, thinking that it is the fourth raka’ah. The congregation reminded him by tasbeeh, so he quickly stood up for the fourth raka’ah. The congregation stood up before the imam for the fourth raka’ah as they are not used to their imam sitting for isterahah (rest). The imam now does not know that they stood up before him, and he did not prostrate for forgetting in the end of the prayer as he knows it is permissible to sit between the third and fourth raka’ah for isterahah. What is the ruling on this prayer as for the imam and the congregation?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

If the matter is as you describe, then the members of the congregation do not have to do anything for standing up before the imam, thinking that the imam had said the takbeer for standing up for the fourth rak’ah.

As for the imam, he should have done the prostration of forgetfulness, because he sat with the intention of reciting the tashahhud, not with the intention of resting.

It says in Kashshaaf al-Qinaa’ (1/395): If the worshipper deliberately does some additional action in the prayer, such as standing, sitting, bowing or prostrating, then the prayer is invalidated according to scholarly consensus, because he has spoiled the order of the prayer and changed its form.

But if he adds that by mistake, even if the sitting that he added at the wrong place was the length of sitting for a rest immediately after a rak’ah, such as if he sat immediately after it for the

tashahhud – whether or not we say that it is mustahabb to sit for a rest – because he did not intend that when he sat, rather he intended to recite the tashahhud by mistake, then it is obligatory for him to do the prostration of forgetfulness, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said, according to the hadeeth of Ibn Mas'ood (may Allaah be pleased with him): If a man adds or omits something in his prayer, let him prostrate twice." Narrated by Muslim. End quote.

But if the imam did not do the prostration of forgetfulness, thinking that he did not have to do it, or because he forgot to do it, then his prayer is still valid.

And Allaah knows best.