

Detail Analysis of “Sadaqah Jariyah” in Islam

The Short Answer

Sadaqah Jariyah literally translates from its original Arabic as "flowing," or "running" (*jariyah*) "charity" (*sadaqah*), meaning charity that one gives in life that continues to provide charitable benefit to its designated recipients and, therefore, divine reward to its giver, after its donor passes away from this life. It is commonly called "ongoing charity," "perpetual charity," or "running (as in a river) charity." The phrase "ever-flowing charity" reflects this type of charity's special capacity to reach both recipients and giver after the donor's death.

The Detailed Answer

Technically, *Sadaqah Jariyah* comes under the Islamic legal category of *waqf*, or endowment. The Arabic word *waqf* literally means "frozen," in the sense of something "standing still," or "held in a fixed state or condition." This describes the legal state of the original charitable gift. This also simultaneously reflects the charity's stipulation of the benefit, that is the fruit, of its original gift helping defined, eligible designees in the world in perpetuity and its good recompense accruing to its giver in his or her afterlife, potentially until the end of time.

What Is the origin of the charitable concept of *waqf* and its relation to *Sadaqah Jariyah*?

Scholars cite a documented exchange between the Companion 'Umar Ibn Al-Khaṭṭab, Allah be pleased with him, and the Prophet Muhammad, on him be peace, as the origin of charitable endowment (*waqf*) and ongoing charity (*Sadaqah Jariyah*).

'Umar, received a share of the land of Khaybar [planted as date orchards]. He came to the Messenger of Allah, Allah blessings and peace be upon him, asking what he should

do with it. He said: "O Messenger of Allah! I have been given a share of [the orchards of] Khaybar. Never have I been given wealth dearer to me than this. To what do you command me regarding it? He [the Prophet, on him be peace] said: "If you wish, you may freeze it" [that is, endow it as a perpetual charity]. Umar then bequeathed [the land] to charity, stipulating that it was not to be sold, given away as a gift, or inherited. Rather, he designated [its produce] for the poor, relatives, slaves, wayfarers, and guests, for the sake of Allah. Nor would there be sin upon one appointed to tend it if he ate a normal amount from it, or likewise fed others, storing none of it for the future. (Bukhari and Muslim)

Did the Prophet, on him be peace, specifically say *Sadaqah Jariyah* benefits us after our death?

Yes. The Prophet, on him be peace, famously said:

"When a human being dies, all one's deeds cease, save three: a *Sadaqah Jariyah*, [religious] knowledge [one leaves behind] from which others benefit, and a righteous child who prays for one" (Muslim).

He said also:

"The best one leaves behind after death are three: a righteous child who prays for one, a *Sadaqah Jariyah*, the rewards of which continue to reach one, and [religious] knowledge that continues to be applied after him" (Ibn Majah).

What is the difference between *sadaqah* as charity and *Sadaqah Jariyah*, as ongoing charity?

Charity that is purely *sadaqah*, meaning it is not ongoing, is given to another to become that person's property to dispose of as that recipient sees fit, for example, money, food, clothing, medicine, utensils, etc. *Sadaqah Jariyah*, ongoing charity, suspends the original property in a state of endowment, so that its fruits or proceeds may continuously or repeatedly be given to whomever makes up the original giver's designees. That original charitable property is not given away in any circumstance.

What happens if the original property designated for *Sadaqah Jariyah* charity disappears?

Sadaqah Jariyah continues so long as its *waqf* remains in existence. So a hospital one has founded as an ongoing charity provides its donor(s) reward for its use as long as it remains in existence. A bed, or home, or shelter for the widow, the orphan, or the refugee or displaced continues benefitting its giver with heavenly reward for the duration of that charitable item's use. If, in our example, a hospital falls into decline, or its location becomes unreachable or of no use, or the machines in it one has donated fall into disrepair, then that facility or apparatus may be sold. If the proceeds are used to reestablish or replace its charitable purpose in another facility or device, then the charitable uses will continue to accrue to the original donor's or donors' heavenly benefit.

What kinds of acts qualify as *Sadaqah Jariyah*?

The Prophet, on him be peace, gives examples of this:

"Of the good works whose benefit flows to a believer after death is knowledge one taught and promulgated, a righteous child who lived after one, a copy of the Quran that one left as inheritance, a mosque one built, a house one built for the two kinds of wayfarers [travelers and the displaced], a stream one ran [that is, dug or directed for others to benefit from], a charity given from one's wealth while healthy in life such that it will reach one [in reward] after death," meaning the charity is given with that intent and not for the sake of one's cure from illness (Ibn Majah).

The common thread of these charities is that someone intentionally causes them in goodness for the sake of Allah, either through one's deliberate striving or good action. For this reason, Allah tallies the efforts of others as one's own earnings. Hence, one expends on and trains a child in righteousness who then does good on a parent's behalf — even in that child's worship with the intent of benefitting a parent, like making Ḥajj for one that has not made it, or fasting a missed obligatory fast for a parent, or giving charity for a father or mother, or supplicating Allah on their behalf. Or if one writes a book of religious knowledge that another learns from, that learning benefits the compiler of the book. Or if one provides copies of, for example, the Quran (*mushaf*) to a mosque, other public institution, or to people, their reading benefits the one who provided them with it. Or if one builds a place that others can worship in, or a free shelter for

those on the road, or the homeless, or the widow, or the orphan, or a hospital or clinic where patients receive medical aid, the builders of these receive the reward.

Does the size or amount of the *Sadaqah Jariyah* matter?

No. The Prophet, on him be peace, specifically stated in this regard: "One who builds a mosque for the sake of Allah — though it be as [small as] the nest of a sand grouse — Allah will build for such a one a house in Paradise" (Aḥmad). This means that no matter the quantity of an ongoing charity, it will yield reward to its giver so long as its use remains.

Does *Sadaqah Jariyah* provide special reward to its givers in the Hereafter?

Sadaqah Jariyah increases our reward in the Hereafter because of the perpetual or ongoing benefit it provides people in need in this life. This is important because the Prophet, on him be peace, said:

"The charity of each one shades him on the Day of Resurrection — a Day in which the sun shall be brought near the heads of people, until Allah passes judgment between them" (Aḥmad).

Giving charity in this life, then, in and of itself becomes physically and spiritually crucial to our condition in the Afterlife, and *Sadaqah Jariyah* multiplies the benefit of our charity. Charity is an investment in our Hereafter, and *Sadaqah Jariyah* literally magnifies the physical manifestation of our investment on the Day of Judgment, while increasing its spiritual weight in our balances, causing a single charitable investment to grow both in number and volume.