

## **Postscript**

### **Lameen Souag**

Some years after completing the preceding article, the author came across what is so far the closest parallel to “What Do You Want Money For?” outside northwestern Africa: a Galician Yiddish nursery rhyme (Pipe 1971:200–201), which goes as follows (author’s rough translation, ignoring diminutives):

*Ele, bele, Yoske,*  
You have a black bride.  
She goes in red shoes,  
She stands on the green tree.  
“What are you standing on the green tree (for)?”  
“To pluck leaves.”  
“What do you need leaves (for)?”  
“To give to the cows.”  
“What do you need cows (for)?”  
“To milk milk.”  
“What do you need milk (for)?”  
“To cook kasha.”  
“What do you need kasha (for)?”  
“To give to the kids.”  
“What do you need kids (for)?”  
“To study Torah.”

Another version (Anonymous 1917:99) is slightly different, and crucially so in the final line:

*Ele, bele, Yoske,*  
You have a black bride.  
In red shoes she goes;  
Under a tree she stands.  
What does she stand under the tree for?  
To pluck leaves.  
What use are leaves to her?  
To whip cows.

What use are cows to her?  
 To milk milk from.  
 What use is milk to her?  
 To give to kids.  
 What use are kids to her?  
 To live to see *nakhes* (i.e. to rejoice in their success)!

No cat appears, and the overall plan outlined is rather different. Nevertheless, this must be analysed as sharing a more remote common origin with “What Do You Want Money For?” Both stories consist primarily of a chain ascending from casual gathering to the purpose of life, with the latter varying according to the teller. In both, this chain involves cows, milk, and children—though not in the same order. Remarkably, they even seem to share a syntactic peculiarity: in at least some Yiddish versions, as in Tamazight, the repeated questions are formed using the usual word for ‘what?’ in the sense of ‘why?’ or ‘how come?’, without any overt preposition.

In the first version, the curious phrasing “*on* the green tree” rather suggests a bird than a bride. As it happens, the Kovno/Kaunas region attests a more divergent (perhaps parodic?) bachelor’s version of this song (Ginzburg and Marek 1901, no. 102), in which a bird appears:

*Alye-yulye*, Yoste:  
 How many birds do I have?  
 I have a dove;  
 The dove brings me grain;  
 With the grain, I bake bread;  
 The bread I give to the chicks;  
 The chicks lay eggs for me;  
 The eggs I sell;  
 And the money, I spend on drink!

It is thus plausible that in Eastern Europe, as in North Africa, this originally opened with the incongruous image of an animal working to build up a human household.

In light of this comparative data, both these and “What Do You Want Money For?” may be viewed as instances of a broader schema, whereby question-answer pairs outline a life plan that progresses recursively from simple gathering to life’s ultimate goal by using the profits of each successive enterprise to achieve the next. This perspective increases its similarity to ATU 2034F, “The Clever Animal and the Fortunate Exchanges,” already noted—but the absence of any element of lending, and often even of exchange, still distances it. Whereas ATU 2034F stars a travelling trickster—essentially, an exaggerated caricature of a trader—“Ele, bele, Yoske” and “What Do You Want Money For?” keep the focus firmly on the domestic economy. Perhaps this tale’s absence from the ATU index and from the folk tale collections examined is because, outside of this part of North Africa, it is typically not a tale at all, but a nursery rhyme. Verifying this hypothesis would require an extensive literature search of a very different kind—starting with a search for parallels in other Eastern European languages, which is unfortunately beyond this author’s linguistic abilities.

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## References

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