

Transcript

Welcome to Easy Stories in English, the podcast that will take your English from OK to Good, and from Good to Great.

I am Ariel Goodbody, your host for this show. Today's story is for beginners. The name of the story is *The Holy Cat*. You can find a transcript of the episode at EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Holy. That's EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Holy. There, you can also download the episode as a PDF.

Today's story is a Palestinian folk tale, a folk tale from Palestine. There are some references to Islam in the story. I learned some things about Islam while writing this story. Hopefully, you'll learn something, too!

OK, I'll just explain some words that are in today's story.

Something that is religious, related to religion, is **holy**. Basically, 'holy' means good in relation to God and church. When God thinks something is good, that thing is holy. So, for example, we can say that John the Baptist was a holy person. Of course, in Christianity, Jesus was a very holy person, and in Islam the prophet Mohammed was a very holy person.

Hunt means to run after and kill animals. In the past, people hunted on horses and used bows and arrows to kill animals. Now, when people hunt they usually walk and use guns to kill animals. In the past, people hunted for food, but these days, people usually hunt for fun, although it's not very fun for the animals!

A **hole** is an empty space in something. If you have some very old clothes, they will probably have holes in them. You can put your finger in the hole. Some people get very angry and hit their wall, and then they have a hole in their wall. Not a good idea.

Beads are small round things. Beads are made of plastic, wood or glass. Beads are often put on clothes to make them beautiful. **Prayer beads** are special beads that are used for praying. Prayer beads are usually on a string, and you wear prayer beads around your neck. For example, the Rosary is a Christian type of prayer beads. Islamic prayer beads are misbaha and tasbeeh. You hold the prayer beads and you pray. For example, if there are thirty beads, then you say thirty prayers.

Cats make a sound calling **purring**. Purrs sounds like [sound of purring]. Cats purr when they are happy.

When you are in a place that you don't want to be, you might **run away**, run to another place. For example, if your mother is very angry at you, you could run away, but she might run after you. If you see a wolf or a bear, you should probably run away.

In religion, a **sin** is when you do something wrong. For example, in Christianity, killing people, stealing and lying are all serious sins. Most people think that these things are bad, but a sin is something more serious. The idea is that God judges you for your sins. People pray to say sorry for their sins. A person who sins a lot is a sinner.

When you **learn something by heart**, you learn it so well that you remember it completely. For example, if you like a song a lot, you might learn it by heart. Then you will remember all the words and you will be able to sing it perfectly. In the past, people often learned poems by heart. But these days, few people learn things by heart, because it's very easy to look things up on your phone.

When you **test** someone, you see if they can do something. For example, if your friend says they have learned a poem by heart, you might test them and ask them to say the poem.

Or you might test yourself. Maybe you think you're really good at playing guitar, so to test yourself, you record a video and then watch it to see if you're good at playing.

Damn is a rude word, a bad word, that you use when you are angry. You can just say 'Damn!' or you can damn a thing or a person. For example, if your phone is always breaking, you can say, 'Damn this phone!' Or if you really don't like someone because they play the saxophone very loudly outside your house, you can say, 'Damn you and your saxophone!'

OK, so listen and enjoy!

The Holy Cat

Once, there was a cat who lived in a town. The cat was very good at **hunting** mice. The mice in the town were slow, so the cat caught lots of them. The cat knew where all the mouse **holes** were, so he could sit outside the mouse holes and wait for the mice to come out.

Soon, the cat had hunted all the mice in the town.

So the cat went into the fields to hunt mice. But the mice who lived in the fields were much quicker than the town mice. The cat tried to hunt them, but he didn't catch many mice.

The cat had an idea. He left the fields for a few weeks and waited. Then he put some **prayer beads** around his neck and sat outside a mouse hole. He closed his eyes and started **purring**. He purred so that it sounded like a prayer.

Soon, a mouse came out of the hole and saw the cat with his prayer beads. 'Oh no, a cat!' he said, and quickly went back into the hole.

'Why do you **run away**?' said the cat softly. 'I am an old neighbour who has come back from holy travels, but you do not say "hello". You run away when you see me. Do not be afraid. Come and talk, and pray with me.'

The mouse was very surprised. It stayed in the hole, but it spoke to the cat. 'Why should I come and talk with you? Do cats not hunt mice? If I come and pray with you, you will eat me just like you ate my brothers and sisters.'

'Ah!' said the cat sadly. 'What you say is true. I have **sinned** many times. I sinned every time I hunted a mouse. But I am truly sorry. Look at these prayer beads. I do not hunt now, but I spend my time praying and reading holy books. I have studied the Qur'an and **learned the Qur'an by heart**, and I have visited the Hajj in Mecca.'

The mouse was very surprised by this. It was a very holy thing to do to learn the Qur'an by heart. Those who learned the Qur'an by heart were called Hafiz. And it was also very holy to visit Hajj. Those who visited Hajj were called Hajji. So this cat was both a Hafiz and a Hajji, which made him very holy.

'Go and tell your people about this,' said the cat. 'Tell them that I am sorry for my sins, and that I am working to be a better cat. Tell them that I want to speak and pray with them.' And the cat started purring again, like he was praying.

The mouse went and told his family, who were also very surprised. Each of them went and looked out of the hole, and saw the cat with his prayer beads, purring in a holy way. The mice all talked and decided to **test** the cat's holiness. They sent one mouse out to test the cat.

The mouse came out of the hole but stayed far away from the cat.

'Hello, friend,' said the cat, and went back to his 'praying'.

The mouse stayed outside a long time to test the cat. The cat prayed for a long time. But really, the cat was waiting for other mice to come out. He wanted to eat lots of them. But he sat there purring all day, and still there was only one mouse there to test him. He got hungrier and hungrier. Finally, he could not wait.

The cat moved to eat the mouse, but the mouse was ready. When the cat moved, the mouse quickly ran into the hole.

‘Why are you running away?’ said the cat. ‘I wanted to give you a friendly hug! You have tested my holiness – did I not pray all day? Have I not learned the Qur’an by heart?’

‘A sinner can pray all day, but if he sins afterwards, it does not matter,’ said the mouse. ‘And you may have learned the Qur’an by heart, but you have not unlearned hunting mice.’

The cat moved so quickly that his prayer beads fell off, but he did not catch the mouse.

‘Damn you!’ said the cat. ‘Damn every mouse in this world, and damn Allah!’

The cat returned to the town. But there were no more mice there. So every day the cat had to purr nicely and ask for food from people. Sometimes, he tried hunting in the fields, but he never caught another mouse.

THE END

If you enjoyed today’s episode and want to be able to read my stories in a physical format, then good news! I have a book of ten short stories based on the podcast. It’s called [*Easy Stories in English!*](#) Wow, so original... Get it on Amazon, Apple Books or Google Books, or go to EasyStoriesInEnglish.com/Book to find out where it’s available. Thank you for listening, and see you soon!