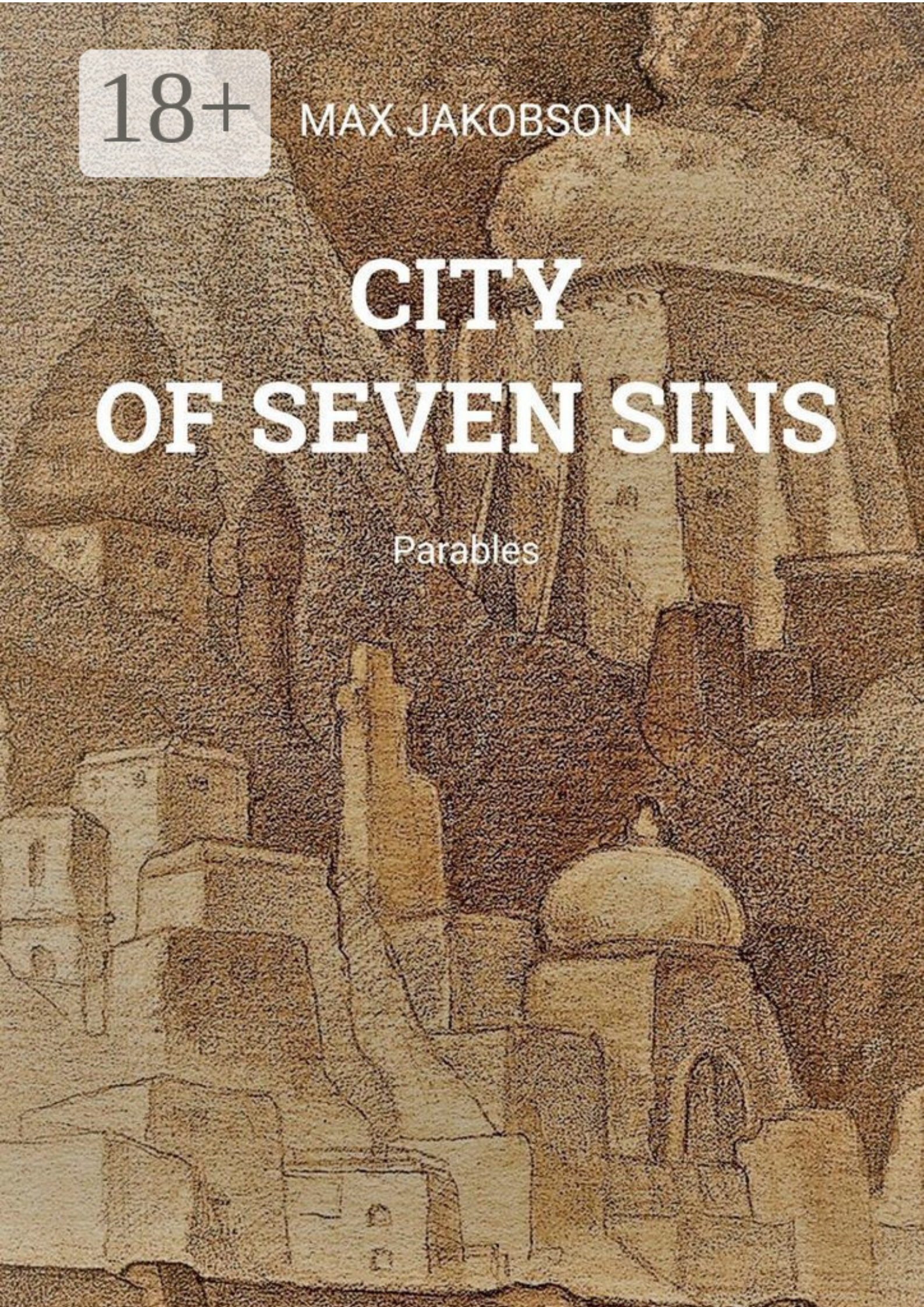


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MAX JAKOBSON

CITY OF SEVEN SINS

Parables



Max Jakobs

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«Издательские решения»

Jakobs M.

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Have you heard of City of Seven Sins? Do you want me to show you the way? Borders might be closed but there's one place that still welcomes you. Sweet passions, miseries and joy, dreams and disappointments — all the colors of life are waiting your there. The book composed solely of short works and filled with poetic vision. Discover ancient myths reimagined and sharp ironic take on modern day reality.

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Tower of Babel

New reading

High mountains hid in the deep ocean along with the last hopes of returning home. For several years, the shaking of water and earth turned villages and cities into dust and dirt; billowing waves carried boats, crops and lives to the ocean. Nothing remained of the great empire, only the memories that survivors will pass on to their children and entrust to descendants to tell again.

And they were only a few hundred, and they did not know if there was anyone else besides them in the whole world. The birds led their large ship, which was badly damaged by storms, into fertile land: on each side of the land great rivers flowed, quenching thirst and yielding food.

A year after the flood, when the first crop was harvested and the second was ripening, the eldest survivor of the flood, Hanoch, proclaimed:

“We mourned our great homeland and the departed. But the Almighty Father loves us for he saved our lives and granted us a beautiful land, the sun and a clear sky. We are gathering a rich harvest and building houses for our families. The time has come to give glory to the Almighty and to erect a temple to heaven in His honor and in His name, so that generations to come will see the greatness of the Creator, and the Almighty will continue to be merciful.”

With rejoicing, the words of Hanoch were received. For he did not even learn the opinion of everyone, before the people leapt from their places and cried out:

“Yes! Verily we will build a temple in the name of our Heavenly Father!”

And all as one they elected to begin from tomorrow’s sunrise. And Hanoch, in addition to his venerable status, became the chief architect of the temple.

The first rays of the sun barely reached over the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, before the entire nation, young and old, were standing at the house of Hanoch in readiness, waiting to hear the first orders for construction of the temple to the Most High.

“Listen to me,” Hanoch began, “we must create a great temple, the highest, higher than those we had before the flood, so our Heavenly Father can see our love for Him and reverence and would not send the flood to our nation again! All will have work: someone will have to extract stone and fire bricks, someone will have to carry them to their place, someone will need to lay walls, someone will need to paint them, and someone will graze the livestock and grow wheat, so everyone will be fed.

Hundreds of men and women as one soul welcomed Hanoch’s speech and set to work under his leadership unconditionally fulfilling all his directions, believing in their work as good. Yerachmiel was responsible for the selection and preparation of stone and brick; the most powerful of all – Shimshon, was responsible for the delivery of building material, he could alone lift a huge granite monolith and carry it from the mine to the site of the temple’s construction. Many great men helped Shimshon, including Ephraim, whose wife Gili gave him the great joy of many sons. Hayim and Zeev began the erection of the walls of the temple, and with them ten dozen men. For once before Hayim built a port in a big city and Zeev worked for him. Painting and embellishing the walls of the temple was entrusted to Hillel and Aaron, who had an eye for beauty, but also Hillel remembered the sacred texts of the forefathers well. Responsible for increasing and raising livestock was young Itzhak, whose beautiful wife Yonah weaved carpets for the temple from the wool of the sheep. Talia and Merav became the head bakers, and therefore one of the most respected wives of the whole community. Ilana and Lilach offered to create a garden of trees and flowers around the temple.

And so, when a huge field was cleared for the future temple, Hanoch came out before the whole nation and made a speech, which gave them even greater strength and faith.

“Today, in the early morning hour, I heard the voice of the Most High, and He told me what His temple should be and what we must do to be in His mercy.”

An animated murmur ran down the rows of people, and some began to fall to their knees with tears in their eyes.

“The Almighty said that it is necessary to build a pyramid, which will become a platform on which to build His temple. He also ordered all of us,” emphasized Hanoch, “to work every day, except for the days of the full moon, when it is needful to devote all of the time to prayer.”

Cries of delight were heard far beyond the valley, for so great was the joy to see their prophet amongst them. And everyone rushed forward to build the pyramid. Zeev said that he participated in the construction of one pyramid in the old times, and Hillel hastened to bring from his salvaged library an encyclopedia of the great buildings of the past.

Every morning, Hanoch took to the field and shared messages from the Almighty about the valiant labor and the great work of their nation: for all living, for the earth, and even the Heavens. And everyone paused in their work at this hour such was the reverence for Hanoch. They titled Hanoch a prophet and freed him from all labor, and all his needs were met by the help of everyone: whether it was building a new house or sewing ritual dresses. Over time the wife of Zeev, Galia who was quick-witted, began to record the messages of the Almighty, delivered through the prophet Hanoch, onto a large board in front of the pyramid being built. Now everyone could see the instructions of Heaven and reread them in moments of rest.

The Prophet Hanoch became so busy with his service to the Almighty that he stopped coming to the builders in the morning, he voiced all the messages to Galia, and she delivered them to the others. Galia had become much respected; all came to her to learn more about the epistles of Hanoch.

“Tell me, dear Galia, has the Almighty opened to our prophet Hanoch today what flowers to plant around the temple?” Asked Lilach.

“Unfortunately, no, maybe tomorrow this will be opened to us,” answered Galia.

And Lilach came to Galia the next day and the following days to learn more about flowers or anything else.

The pyramid was being built, and now the first two levels were ready. The work went smoothly and efficiently, each helped each other, and no one was offended.

“I already gave you a bowl of soup and three cakes, how much more do you want!” Old Merav protested in the kitchen when the ever-hungry Shimshon came to her.

“Granite slabs are very heavy, Merav. Oh, tomorrow there will be no more beautiful slabs for facing from the northern quarry, there will not be any,” Shimshon started his pitiful song that never failed to touch Merav: she sighed and would soon find an extra loaf of bread and a bowl of soup for Shimshon.

When the third level of the pyramid was ready, everyone in a single impulse began to build the fourth. The prophet Hanoch entered the construction field, and he was clearly serious, and his expression was sober.

“This was a test for us. For the Most High tried our faith and our willingness to follow Him. And we followed Him and began to build a pyramid, but what is the need for a pyramid, is it a mirage of the former empire that was hidden under the sea waters? Why do we need to return that which is already gone and perished?”

Nobody could understand, everyone left their affairs and listened to the prophet Hanoch, as statues, without moving.

“Why should we go back when the Almighty commands us to go forward,” the prophet Hanoch continued, “why should we look back at death when life is ahead?”

Hanoch went to the board on which Galia wrote down his epistles, and drew a tower with a few movements of the chalk.

“That’s what the Almighty tells us to put here in His name. And at the top of this tower, under the very clouds, build a temple in His honor!”

“But why?” Exclaimed Hayim. “We have already built almost four levels of a pyramid!”

“Hayim, are you a righteous son? Bend your knees and go to fulfil His message,” the prophet Hanoch asserted menacingly, so that no one else asked any questions.

“You only need to reconstruct the corners, and that will be the base of the tower,” said Hillel.

“I can do it without difficulty,” Zeev hastened to include.

“And I already wove the first temple carpet, and there are images of a pyramid on it,” Yonah worried.

“Give it to us in the kitchen,” Talia found a solution.

“But nothing will change for Shimson and I,” Ephraim said joyfully. “for we will continue to deliver stones and fire bricks.”

“It is good,” the Prophet Hanoch approved of them and went to his new home to continue his service.

And all with the same zeal began to build a tower. A staircase would lead to its top, rising in a spiral to the temple. And after some time, everyone concluded that the tower was the best decision for the new temple.

“It will be easier for me to paint the walls, and it will be more convenient to look at the inscriptions when climbing the tower,” Aaron claimed.

“At each level of the tower I will plant beautiful flowers and shrubs, so that the tower will be like a garden,” Lilach planned.

Hayim also saw that the tower had many advantages, and did not ask any more questions, for what doubts could there be if the Almighty himself ordered the tower to be built: He knows best.

And three years passed. The walls of the tower rose so high that they were visible from anywhere in the city, as well as from the opposite bank of the Euphrates. Hillel and Aaron had already started to paint the lower levels, and Yonah had woven two dozen carpets. Galia and her assistants preserved the epistles of the prophet Hanoch in tablets for which a scriptorium was built. And so, instead of waiting in line to visit the house of the prophet, everyone could go here and with the help of Galia find the answer in one of the epistles. And everything would proceed accordingly if it were not for the fourth anniversary of the construction, which coincided with the crimson-red moon. For the prophet Hanoch called everyone to the square near the tower under construction.

“It seems to us that the world has blessed our lands, and that peace and happiness have settled in our homes for centuries, so know that this prosperity may end soon.”

An anxious energy swept through those who were gathered, following the words of the prophet Hanoch.

“Among us there are those who have departed from the covenants of the Most High,” the prophet continued. “Among us there are those who doubted me as a true prophet, and where there is doubt, there is evil, and where there is evil, there is destruction.”

There were exclamations in the multitude.

“Who is it? Who is the traitor, who is the enemy?” some cried out from the crowd.

In an instant, the feeling of peace and love left the inhabitants of the valley.

“Hayim!” called the prophet Hanoch. “You are the one who sowed doubts in our people, you are the one in whom evil and destruction grows!”

The words of the prophet sounded like thunder, everyone parted around Hayim and stared at him in silence. Hayim, having dropped the instruments from his hands, could not say anything.

“Hayim, you did not comprehend the message of the Most High and did not accept His will to build a tower. As an experienced builder, it was more convenient for you to continue the construction of the pyramid, because you had built similar structures earlier. For, when everyone knelt down and without hesitation began to build a tower, you continued to doubt and confuse the rest. Beloved ones,” the Prophet Hanoch called on the people, “I urge you now to voice whom Hayim has caused to doubt. You must confess, and then forgiveness will be granted to you.”

“Yes, beloved prophet Hanoch, Hayim has repeatedly shared his doubts with me,” said Zeev from the ranks. “He wondered why the Almighty did not immediately order us to build a tower. Forgive me, brother Hayim, but for your good, I have told the truth.”

“See how many years a deceiver, a secret enemy, has lived amongst us, and by the same token he erected the walls of the temple. Hayim, I am banishing you from our community and the whole valley, you have no place amongst us anymore,” the prophet Hanoch announced the verdict.

The sentence was severe and could not be challenged. Everyone received his decree, and no one leaving the square looked towards Hayim standing alone and rejected by all. The next morning, Hayim and his family left the valley; no one knew where they were going.

The construction of the tower continued without Hayim, his stone house was dismantled, and the stones went into a common cause. Zeev became the head builder and quickened the pace of the construction of the tower, which could not but please the prophet Hanoch. Soon Zeev received from the prophet the title of chief guardian and protector of the temple being built, and his wife Galia was awarded the title of keeper of the scriptorium. The Prophet Hanoch began to distribute titles to others who distinguished themselves in their service and devotion to the people of the valley. And so Ilana was given the title for zealous preparation of the park near the tower. Ilana’s close friend Lilach, who was responsible for decorating the temple with flowers, did not receive the title, and set off to Galia in the hope of discovering when she will gain her title. Galia, without thinking twice, went to the prophet Hanoch and told him about the quest of Lilach. Soon after, on the same evening, the Prophet Hanoch gathered everyone in the square near the tower, struck a bronze disk and began his speech:

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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