

# The Courage to Be Afraid

A collection of poetry for children

NAVA SEMEL

## FIXING YESTERDAY

Quietly, gently, with my head on the pillow  
I reconstruct the day that's just finished  
How it started and how it came to an end  
I was rude with my teacher  
In Torah I failed  
The push I got from Jack  
And how Nina turned her back  
I go over it all  
The big things and the small  
I sweep out my mistakes  
Wipe out the stupid pranks  
Improve it all backward  
Put everything at rest  
Try to remember the best  
Even when I can't really fix it  
It's never too late  
In my memory  
It's possible  
Yesterday—to correct.

## BROTHERS

If only Cain would not have killed Abel,  
They would forever remain  
The best of brothers  
The perfect friends  
Now till the Bible ends.  
If only Cain would have said  
Forgive me  
Down on his knees  
And bury his stone  
Replace his fury with grace,  
The world would be a different place.

## THE GUARDIAN ANGEL

*The angel who keeps me  
from all evil  
shall bless the children.*  
These are the words  
my grandfather taught me  
when I was little.  
He leaned over in his  
white *kittel* and said:  
This prayer is a shawl that protects you  
and keeps you from harm  
*The angel who redeems*  
is a whisper before sleep.

Time went on to another place  
my grandfather and his white robe  
aren't with me anymore  
and I'm not the child  
who slept in her room alone  
so afraid of the dark.

Now it's my turn to teach others  
to bless me and all the children  
*Sh'ma Yisrael, Hear O Israel*  
Whoever is curled up beside me  
also murmurs the words  
*The angel who redeems*  
and somewhere, far away,  
my grandfather keeps praying with me.

*Jerusalem*

*Translation from the Hebrew  
By Linda Zisquit*

Israeli author NAVA SEMEL has written eleven books and three plays, including *Becoming Gershona*, winner of the National Jewish Book Award (1990). She also received the Israeli Prime Minister's Award for Literature in 1996. The poem "Brothers" is from her latest verse collection, *The Courage to Be Afraid*, released by the Tel Aviv publisher Sifriyat Poalim.