PREFACE

Often I pick up my well-worn Bible, now held together with cello tape, to search for solutions to the problems that bother me. Hardly ever do I find solutions, but I always do find hope. The compassionate words of Jesus to the poor and needy come alive for me as I deal with my own fears and worries. The words of Job "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return; the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away"(1:21) and "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, shall we not receive evil?"(2:10) often fascinate me and stand me in good stead on my inward journey. When I recall these words, I become a little less afraid. I realize that I don't have to be so self-reliant. I find peace.

When I go further, I know that The Book of Job contains the predicaments of everyman. Job is not at all that patient and timid in the poetry part, as we see him in the prologue and epilogue. As everyman in the world he too raises the basic question like why an innocent man should suffer. Yet he is justified in the end. Inscrutable are God's ways! Although the many advances that have been made in the field of Science have enhanced the quality of human life, suffering persists. In fact suffering has increased due to global problems. Thus The Book of Job is still relevant, because Job stands for everyman.

Suffering, commitment, and responsibility are the special virtues of Bernard Malamud's heroes. The heroes begin as ordinary men, but they acquire the courage to make difficult moral choices. They have to discover their own moral laws. At the heart of these moral laws is responsibility. Each one must determine his responsibility for himself and for others. When the characters are committed to an ideal, their suffering is ennobled. When Frank decides to take up the responsibility of Bobers, his suffering is ennobled. Here one finds Malamud's unmistakable legacy of the tradition of The Book of Job. This legacy is best manifested in the novels The Assistant and The Fixer, and in the stories in the collection, The Magic Barrel. Therefore the focus of the present study is primarily on these works, though there are several references to the other works. A close study of the nature of this legacy is possible by examining the fictional world of Bernard Malamud in the context of The
Book of Job tradition. Such a study is bound to give better insight into both and also into the human situation common to both. Except for occasional improvisations, the guidelines of the MLA have been generally followed in preparing the thesis. As a good number of the texts committed are American, American spellings are frequently used.