Chapter 11

The Theme of Suffering

One of the most striking features common to *The Book of Job* and Malamud's fiction is the persisting preoccupation with the theme of suffering. This is the result of the common legacy of both from the Hebraic tradition in which suffering has been a subject of serious concern from very early times. The Judaic-Christian folk wisdom insists that even though God’s ways are beyond human comprehension, God acts decisively against suffering. Consequently, God is the human hope in the face of suffering. However, reflective believers complain that God still remains somehow responsible for the occurrences of suffering. Nevertheless, the God who bears some responsibility for the occurrence of suffering is also the God who is believed by many to act decisively against suffering. This enhances the mystery about the causes and the meaning of suffering. A. Koutsouvilis in his article “Is Suffering Necessary for the Good Man?” in *The Heythrop Journal* points out that some kind of suffering is essential for the good man. He sees guilt and innocence in terms of something higher than human thoughts, in terms of divine categories. He says that every human conception of fortune and misfortune and of what is joyful or sorrowful is erroneous. A man must recognize that with respect to God, he is always in the wrong. For example, Job was, humanly speaking, the most innocent of men, but he was constantly in the wrong in relation to God.

Wisdom literature teaches that spiritual suffering is a necessity for the ethical and religious man. Koutsouvilis points out that inwardness, the core of the ethico-religious man, understands suffering as something essential. This inwardness is the relation of the individual to himself before God; it is the reflection into one's own self. Suffering derives from the fact that a man reflects into himself. Absence of suffering signifies absence of religiosity, whereas in the presence of suffering, religiosity begins to breathe. It seems
therefore that Socrates’ good man must inevitably suffer as he realizes that while he is in the mortal state he is condemned to ignorance and is unable to comprehend what goodness really is. Koutsouvilis’ ethico-religious man also must undergo a kind of suffering as he realizes that being a man he is excluded from all that pertains to the divine. In respect to God, man is always in the wrong. A kind of spiritual suffering then seems to be essential both for ethico-religious man and the kind of good man Socrates wished to become. This suffering is not merely the pains brought about by the words and actions of other men, but a realization of the inability to achieve the goodness or piety for which the good man strives. This suffering though painful, has beneficial effects in so far as it prevents the sufferer from forgetting his own inadequacies and ensures against a conceit of wisdom. James Aylward Mohler in his *The Sacrament of Suffering* says that God humbles the soul in order to raise it(14). To be born again, the soul must be purged by a spiritual burning. The soul ascending to God, must go deep within itself. The living flame of love touches and purifies the soul in a divine cautery. The soul delights in being transformed into God. This sweet burn causes a delightful wound and the soul is purified. The wound keeps enlarging until the soul is one great trauma and yet made whole again. Suffering purifies and purity deepens knowledge by which one comes to truth. Therefore the soul that wants true wisdom must first begin to penetrate into the depth of suffering. The prophet Jeremiah announces that suffering is the proof of God’s concern for Israel, his chosen people. The loved ones are chastised. The sufferer is not just a martyr who bears “the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.” Suffering is part of the purpose of Yahweh. In due time, Yahweh will restore the sufferer:

The Lord says to his people, your wounds are incurable, your injuries cannot be healed, there is no one to take care of you, no remedy for your sores, no hope of healing for you. But, ... I will make you well again; I will heal your
wounds, though your enemies say, Zion is an outcast, no one cares about her, / I, the Lord, have spoken. (Jer. 30:12,13,18)

The suffering of Jacob, the patriarch, is seen in Genesis. In Laban’s house he works for seven years to marry Rachel whom he loves but he is cheated into marrying Leah whom he does not love. He is forced to work for seven more years to get Rachel in marriage. For several years Rachel does not bear a child for Jacob. Rachel spends many years weeping and gnashing teeth. The prophets repeat the theme of the sacrificial lamb. He was meek and innocent through the whole ordeal. This concept is implied in Isaiah:

It was my will that he should suffer/ his death was a sacrifice to bring forgiveness And so he will see his descendants; /he will live a long life, and through him my purpose will succeed./After a life of suffering, he will again have joy/he will know that he did not suffer in vain/My devoted servant, with whom I am pleased,/will bear the punishment of many/and for his sake I will forgive them. (53:10-11)

The issue of suffering leads to the concept of the scapegoat, one who suffers for the guilt of others. The scapegoat is mentioned in the book of Leviticus. In the ritual, a bull for the priests ‘transgressions’ and a goat for the sins of the people are brought. Bathed and clothed in sacred linen, the high priest takes the blood of the slaughtered goat together with the censer and incense into the Holy of Holies. In this way, the sins of the people are expiated. The community presents two goats. Lots are cast. One is chosen for Yahweh. This goat is sacrificed for the sins of the people. The high priest then imposes hands on the other goat. By this symbolic gesture, he transfers to the goat all the sins of the community. It is said: “He shall take from the congregation of the people of Israel two male goats for a sin offering” (Lev.
Jesus Christ is also compared to a “scapegoat” in the sense that through Him, redemption came to all mankind. Christ became incarnate. He suffered like lamb taken to slaughter. “Jesus suffered death for everyone” (Heb. 2:9). Jesus is taken for the scourging and crucifixion as a sacrificial lamb, taken to be slaughtered. It was God’s will that Jesus be killed as he had to take away the sins of the world by his suffering. St. Paul interprets Christ as “our passover” who is sacrificed for the sins of the world (1Cor. 5: 7-8).

This also leads to the concept of the suffering servant. Early Christians associated Jesus with the suffering servant—the lamb sacrificed for the sin of many (Is.53:7-12). Moses’ willingness to be sacrificed for the sins of the people expresses a concept of vicarious atonement that is developed later in the suffering servant of Isaiah. It is Jesus who is this militant, victorious ruler and leader of God’s flock, who will finally make an end of sin in the world.

Possible echoes of the servant figure have been detected in Zechariah as “triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on an ass” (Zech.9: 9). Several times, there appears in Isaiah, a mysterious figure designated as “the Servant of Yahweh”. In Isaiah 49, the servant is explicitly identified with Israel: “You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified.” / .... / Before I was born, the Lord appointed me; / he made me his servant to bring back his people/to bring back the scattered people of Israel (Is.49: 2-3; 5). Here the Lord reaffirms the servant Israel’s call. From the very beginning God has chosen his people as a firm instrument of his purpose. Through this people, God’s glory is to be declared. The servant has a mission to Israel. In 49: 6-7, it is promised that the redeemer will bring the rulers of the nations to acknowledge Israel because of God’s own choice of her:

I have a greater task for you, my servant, / Not only will you restore to greatness the people of Israel who survived, / but I will also make you a light to the nations- so that all the world may be saved./Israel’s holy God and saviour says to the one
who is deeply despised./who is hated by the nations and is the
servant of rulers:/ Kings will see you released and will rise to
show their respect. (Is. 49:6-7)

It is this mission of the servant that necessitates the suffering of
Christ. Passages in chapters 52 and 53 are portrayal of the passion of Jesus,
the Christ: "He was despised and rejected by men;/a man of sorrows, and
acquainted with grief and as one from whom men hide their faces/he was
despised, and we esteemed him not" (Is. 53: 3).

The Hebraic tradition identifies different types of suffering. The first is
"judgmental suffering." Here suffering may be an effect of the divine
judgment for sin, the result of empathy for another’s penalty, or of authentic
repentance and faith in the Lord. It may also serve as a warning to prevent a
greater evil, or discipline for training in Christ-likeness. The second concept is
called "empathetic suffering." Pope John Paul II in the article "Human
Suffering" published in the journal L’Osservatore refers to this kind of
suffering when he says says that suffering sometimes arises, “not from sin but
from love and empathy”(3). One enters into another person’s feelings through
imagination and concern.

Wisdom literature gives much importance to empathetic suffering. It is
the concern for the pains of others. Mohler gives the example of the life of
Edith Stein who suffered under the Nazis. She showed an early concern for the
pains of others in her dissertation on On The Problem of Empathy. According
to her "empathy is an imitation of transference of feeling, perceiving the other
“I” in my “I”(57). As she was a Jew, she saw inevitable suffering ahead, as
Hitler gained more power. As he stepped up his persecution of the Jews, Edith
Stein saw her own people helping bear the cross of Christ, their fellow Jew.
Facing the worst as a true prophetess, Edith Stein offered herself as a sacrifice
for the people. She was issued the yellow star of David to wear at all times.
When the Dutch bishops objected to Nazi cruelty to the Jews, they retaliated with a pogrom against all non-Aryan Catholics in Holland. Edith was arrested immediately. Taken to concentration camp in Westerbork, she was brutally beaten with rifle butts and given little food. She impressed all in the camp with her heroic empathy and sorrowful silence as the Pieta or Rachel weeping for her children. There she guided many souls in her unique empathic manner. Afterwards she was taken to Brzezince near Auschwitz where she was ordered to prepare for the gas chambers. Edith here teaches empathetic suffering by example. She writes in her dissertation that the spirit must annihilate itself spiritually as well as sensually. She says: “When it [the soul] is reduced to nothing in the most profound humiliation, then the spiritual union with God comes to pass, which is the highest stage the soul can reach on this earth”(43).

Edith Stein in her Autobiography also says that empathy with others who suffer, produces suffering.

The third type of suffering is called “vicarious suffering.” Here God in Christ suffered intensely from the manger to the Cross for mankind. St. Paul explains and proves from the Jewish Scriptures that it was necessary for Christ to suffer and die for everyone and rise from the dead. The writer of Hebrews stresses the vicarious nature of Christ’s agony. The fourth is “testimonial suffering,” in which one suffers inwardly out of genuine commitment to a Christ-like life. The believer receives a new nature, but the old nature is not annihilated. A merely ethical existence is not a Christian existence. The genuinely religious life is one of continuous repentance and commitment. People who choose to live for righteousness in an evil world must expect suffering, which is testimonial in nature. The fifth type of suffering is “preventative suffering.” This kind of physical suffering is allowed by God to keep one from more serious spiritual problems. The sixth type is “educational suffering.” The greatest good of the Christian life is Christ-likeness. God plans everything for man’s good. The believer accepts discipline and actively disciplines himself through suffering which is educational.
The Bible suggests some answers to the extremely difficult question as to why there is so much suffering in the world. In the *Book of Job*, the author probes the multiple aspects of human suffering and presents many insights into this issue. Six prominent themes relating to the problem of suffering can be noted here. The first is that a righteous person may suffer terribly, even though he has not sinned. Calamity is not necessarily a hostile witness against a righteous person’s integrity. The second is that Job, a man of great faith and flawless character, suffers deeply in every dimension of his existence—physical, social, spiritual and emotional. These dimensions, to be true, are intertwined in human experience. In the physical realm Job loses his vast wealth and all his children in a single day (1:13-14). In these events Job suffers from both the suddenness and the totality of his losses. A little later he is struck down by a dreaded disease (2:8-10). In the social dimension, Job, the noblest elder of his community, is alienated from his family and friends as he sits in shame on an ash heap outside the city’s walls. His relatives and friends turn against him. Spiritually, God’s silence terrifies Job.

The third concern is the struggle of a righteous person to overcome suffering, the fourth the doctrine of retribution, and the fifth the question of theodicy. Suffering opens Job’s eyes to the discrepancy between the belief that God punishes the wicked and the reality that in numerous cases the wicked are never punished and the innocent are caught by sudden disaster. He wonders whether God is capricious, doing good or ill according to his whims. “It is the same, therefore I say, / He makes an end of the blameless and the wicked./Whenever a scourge kills suddenly,/ he mocks at the despair of the innocent. / A land is given into the power of the wicked,/ the faces of her judges He covered” (9:22-24). Again Job asks, “Why do the wicked live,/ grow old, and become mighty in power?” (21:7). Job strikes at the center of the doctrine of retribution with the question, why do the wicked live? Thus Job raises an issue which is a central issue of theodicy. Elihu teaches that God
uses dreams and suffering as rods of discipline to turn a person from error, even if the error is only potential. "He opens men's ears/ and he frightens them with visions/....../ One may be reproved with pain on his bed,/ with continual aching in his bones/......../All these things God does/ twice, thrice with a man /to restore his soul from the pit/to light him with the light of life" (33:22-30).

Pain is often an instrument of God's mercy. Thus Elihu's words here direct attention to the theodicy of suffering. He acknowledges the great gulf between humanity and God and teaches that God will deliver a man's life from death, if he humbles himself. He also portrays God as mercifully just in all his dealings. The sixth and last prominent theme is an encounter with God. Addressing Job, God affirms that he has structured the world exactly according to his blue prints. He has built justice into the structure of the universe. God asserts that no corner of the world is outside his authority. God also brings Job to the realization that no human being has a proper perspective to judge the course of matters in the universe. The foundation of God's argument in his speeches is that power and wisdom are one in the supreme ruler of the universe. By demonstrating that he exercises his power in wisdom, God proves that he rules the world in justice. The Book of Job teaches that a person may serve God faithfully, whether his circumstances are bleak or filled with promise, for he has the assurance that God is for him, seeking his ultimate good. A person can triumph over suffering through faith in God.

The fictional world of Bernard Malamud is peopled by individuals who go through these different varieties of suffering. And the major concerns of these works of fiction are, implicitly or explicitly, related to the central issues raised by The Book of Job. Sheldon Norman Grebstein in his article "Bernard Malamud and the Jewish movement" says: "Malamud ... follows in the ancient Jewish tradition of the prophets Amos, Jeremiah, the second Isaiah who announce suffering to be the Jew's special destiny" (21).
The concept of vicarious suffering is pervasive in the fictional world of *The Assistant*. In the protagonists, Morris Bober and Frank Alpine, we experience this motif of self-sacrifice, a willing sacrifice, made for others. Morris Bober seems a paragon, a holy man in his honesty, tolerance and compassion. The dingy and starving store is charged with his goodness. He instructs Frank Alpine in the meaning of Jewishness. Morris Bober is a suffering servant like Job. He endures everything. He has the capacity to accept suffering. He says that his father had taught him that all that one needs to become a Jew is a good heart. The Jews suffer more because they are Jews. Bober defines the Jew as a suffering man with a good heart, one who reconciles himself to agony for the sake of the Law, the Hebraic ideal of virtue:

“If you live, you suffer. Some people suffer more, but not because they want. But I think if a Jew don’t suffer for the law, he will suffer for nothing”. “What do you suffer for, Morris?” Frank said. “I suffer for you” Morris said calmly. Frank laid his knife down on the table. His mouth ached. “What do you mean?” "I mean you suffer for me." The clerk let it go at that. “If a Jew forgets the Law”, Morris ended, “he is not a good Jew, and not a good man”.(123-125)

Morris and his wife Ida toil seven days a week, sixteen hours a day in the store. Yet he is close to bankruptcy. His patience is torn. He gets up early morning everyday at three for the convenience of his customers. Even after twenty-one years the store is the same without a change. It is still a poor grocery. After the morning hours no one turns up. As he waits for the customers in vain, he has reveries of the past. He wants to be out in the open as he used to be in his childhood. He thinks: “In a store you were entombed”(6). When Breitbart, the bulb peddler, says that his business is slow, Morris thinks; “The world suffers. He felt every schmertz”(7). Then he thinks of his own son, Ephraim, who died as a child, and he cries silently. Ida
is fifty one and her face is lined, and her legs hurt when she stands too long in the store. She frowns at the grocer for having dragged her into this tomb-like store. She misses her old friends, and on top of her isolation, the endless worry about money embitters her. They both worry about Helen who wants a college education, but is forced instead to take up a job she dislikes. Like all mothers, Ida too is on the verge of tears when she thinks of her daughter’s marriage, as they cannot afford to arrange one for her. The neighbouring businessmen flourish, the grocer on the other hand never alters his fortune because “He ... was the soul of honesty—he could not escape his poverty, it was bedrock; to cheat would cause an explosion in him, yet he trusted cheaters—coveted nobody’s nothing and always got poorer”(16).

Frank Alpine appears first in the novel as a robber. He helps Ward Minogue rob the poor grocer. He takes rolls and milk from the store without permission. But he is haunted by the memories of St. Francis and he repents. He also aspires to do what is right, to be honest and to be good. He wants to lead a better life than that of his guilty and shameful state. He suffers much for the realization of this aim. For him, even the lowly status of a poor storekeeper is better than the streets. He loves Helen too. Morris Bober had dreamt of a college education for Helen. To give his life meaning, she knows she must earn her degree. By dedicating himself to the realization of that dream, by working day and night in the tomb-like store as the assistant, Frank sacrifices himself and enters the divine circle of service and suffering with “discipline and love”(184). Therefore at the end, Frank endures the pain of circumcision and becomes “a Jew.” The idea of suffering for others thus becomes a continuing concern in The Assistant.

Yakov Bok, the protagonist of The Fixer, is an enactment of the suffering servant in the ancient Hebraic tradition. It is this figure, the suffering individual, Bok emphasizes by saying, “nobody suffers for him, and he suffers for no one except himself”(217). He undergoes intense suffering, the vicarious
suffering of the ancient Hebrews. He suffers for all the Jews. Bok thinks of himself as the suffering individual and he suffers for the Jews as their "representative as well as their substitutes". In the Book of Isaiah, the servant is meek(42:3), gentle(42:3), uncomplaining(50:6), and innocent(53:9). He is subjected to constant suffering(50:6 and 53:3) as Yakov Bok is put to constant suffering in the prison. Bok asks: "What had he done to deserve this terrible incarceration, no end in sight?"(139). The servant is reduced to near despair(49:4). Bok is "anguished"(137), at the pair on the scalp in the prison and he shouts in anguish: "Let them kill me"(137). But the servant trusts in the Lord(49:4). Bok too at last “thought of himself pursuing his enemies with God at his side”(189). The servant persevered until he was victorious (42:4 and 50:8). Yakov Bok too emerges victorious at the end: “Some shouted his name”(300). Harold Fisch also says: “He matures and changes”(163). Julius Ostrovsky, Bok’s lawyer, comforts him mentioning his role as scapegoat: “You suffer for us all, ... I would be honoured to be in your place”(27). Bok uses the term of suffering servant to describe himself.

One has to find him[God] in the machinations of his own mind. Spinoza had reasoned him out, but Yakov Bok can’t. He is, after all, no philosopher. So he suffers without either the intellectual idea of God, or God of the covenant; he had broken the phylactery. Nobody suffers for him and he suffers for no one except himself. The rod of God’s anger against The Fixer is Nicholas 11, the Russian Tsar. He punishes the suffering servant for being godless. (217)

Harold Fisch says: “The Christ-role merges ... with that of the ‘suffering servant’ of Isaiah”(163), as it does in the traditional Hebrew Culture. James M Mellard in his article "Four Versions of Pastoral" projects a Christ-like redemption of man through Bok (72). Several analogies with the figure of Christ and his sufferings can be seen in the novel. Yakov Bok’s leaving Shtetl
at the age of thirty, parallels the beginning of Christ’s ministry, at thirty. He spends three years in prison as Christ ministers for three years, and as Christ is tried and killed at thirty three, Yakov goes to his trial at the age of thirty three. Bok seriously entertains the thought of Christ when Zhitnyak smuggles a New Testament into the cell: “Zhitnyak while in the cell, sneaked the Fixer a small green paper-covered New Testament in Russian”(208). It is an event totally adapted by Malamud so as to explain what is happening in the poetics of the narrative. The Hebraic themes are smuggled into a story about a Jewish victim of persecution to see if it will serve for expressing his Jewish troubles. Yakov begins to read the New Testament. Zhitnyak “hears the Fixer recite the Beatitudes”(209). Then “the story of Jesus fascinates him”(209). He thinks that it is an account of the suffering of an innocent man like himself. Jesus goes around doing good. Bok begins to read how Jesus heals the lame, the blind and the epileptics. He is so compassionate that he multiples the loaves and fishes to feed the multitudes who come to listen to him. He feels sympathy for the widow and raises her son from the dead. Bok is deeply moved to read that, in spite of all these good deeds, they spit on him, scourge him and crown him with thorns. At last they hang him on the cross. Bok in pain and agony cries out for help in prison. Thus Malamud strategically suggests a parallel between Yakov Bok, and Jesus though there is an ocean of difference in the sufferings of the two. The relevance of this evocation of Christ and his suffering here is that they bring in the concept of the suffering servant in Jewish tradition with all its associations. Harold Fisch says:

The analogy he draws between Christ and himself in fact had already begun to shape his own story. It has been plausibly suggested that in saving the life of Lebedev, who had collapsed in the snow by the wayside, Bok was acting the part of the Good Samaritan in the parable. The Christ-role merges moreover, with that of the “suffering servant” of Isaiah as it does in traditional Christian typology.(163)
The introduction of Lebedev as drunk and fallen, is prudent enough to show that Bok is a good Samaritan and he is innocent. Bok too goes down the dangerous road from Shtetl to Kiev. Kiev is also noted as a residential center for the anti-Semetics(34). But he thinks: “Among the goyims, his luck might be better, it couldn’t be worse”(33). Drunk and intoxicated, Lebedev lies with his face in the snow. Many Russians and goyims pass by. Bok too hesitates a minute before turning him over, afraid to be involved in trouble”(34). Suddenly Bok notices “the black and white button pinned to his coat, the two headed eagle of the Black Hundreds”(34). He is scared. “Let him shift for himself”(34), he thinks. Though he runs to a corner, he runs back and drags the man to the doorway of the house. Then he carries him up the stairs into the three-story house and lays him on a couch. It is only when the drunkard comes rounds that Bok leaves the place. Here he acts as the good Samaritan in the Bible and therefore a good neighbour to the needy. The good Samaritan in the parable of Jesus is the Christ-like man or Christ Himself. Here in the Lebedev episode in The Fixer(34), Bok has the role of Christ.

Malamud’s skilful selection of the account of the “Tabor” experience(Matthew17:2-12) is also a strategy. He brings Bok into the “Mount Tabor” experience in a “midsummer night”(228) dream just before his intense suffering in the prison, as Jesus brings the disciples into Tabor experience just before the betrayal and crucifixion. In the prison Bok undergoes a high fever and when he comes round, he stands at the peephole staring out into the corridor, as the disciples of Jesus fix their eyes on him. Suddenly his eye throbs “as if it has been touched”(228). Withdrawing his one eye he tries the other. He feels it as a “vision”(228) as the disciples experience. The “vision or visitor”(228)looks like “Shmuel though older, shrunken, grayer, a scarecrow with a frightened beard”(228). He obviously takes the man in the vision to be Moses. Thus he whispers; “Next comes the prophet Elijah or Jesus Christ”(228). The figure stands “in the yellow light”(228) and in the light his
fringed "garment" shines as Jesus' "garments became white as light" (17:2). Then suddenly the prisoner, in disbelief hears a voice, as "a voice from the cloud" (17:5). Bok "wiped his eyes" (228) and he sees no one but Shmuel (228), in the same way that the disciples when they "lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only" (17:8). "That's this God, Yahweh, the one who appears out of clouds, cyclones, burning bushes, talking" (217), Bok thinks. Then the dialogue between Bok and Shmuel follows as there is a dialogue between Jesus and the disciples. Jesus prepares them for the Calvary through this transfiguration. He strengthens them through his exhortations. Shmuel too tries to strengthen Bok with the words: "Without God we can't live .... He's all we have but who wants more? .... When prayers go up blessings descend" (231).

Ostrovasky sees in him a "saviour." His suffering is seen "as a vicarious sacrifice" (Fisch 163). St. Paul stresses the vicarious nature of Christ's agony in that Jesus suffered "death for everyone" (Heb 2:10). Just as the sacrifices have been burned outside the camp, Jesus "suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood" (13:12). Thus Malamud makes Bok an allegorical figure giving the status of the redeemer of the world. Malamud categorizes him as the Christian hero, dying for the world. Bibikov and Ostrovsky give him the title of universal sufferer and saviour. Bibikov thinks that Bok's suffering has meaning for the political liberation of the Russian people from tyranny. But Bok doesn't fully see the point of redemption by suffering. He comes only near to vicarious suffering by his notion of suffering for those whom he loves:

'Live, Shmuel,' he sighs. 'Live. Let me die for you'. Then he thinks in the dark, how can I die for him if I take my life? He may even die for my death, ... if so what do I get by dying, outside of relief from pain? What have I learned if a single Jew dies because I did? Suffering I can gladly live without, I hate...
the taste of it, but if I must suffer let it be for something. Let it be for Shmuel (245).

Yakov has reveries about the past (218) like Job in chapter 29 of The Book of Job. As his reveries extend, he extends the circle of his love to include the whole Jewish people. He thinks that it is sense to suffer for them, and with them and to protect them through his endurance. Here the character of Bok can be seen to be elevated from the suffering servant by traditional "Jewish exegesis which sees the servant as the persona of the whole Jewish people" (Fisch 164). Bok's story here associates with the Nazi Holocaust which would occur thirty years after the events recorded in the fiction. Thus Bok picks up both the salvation myth and the martyrdom in the Holocaust to compare himself with both the events. A mad man would be born to shed the Jewish blood like water. Bok's sufferings would then become symbolic of martyrdom in the Nazi Holocaust:

To the goyim what one Jew is what they all are. If the fixer stands accused of murdering one of their children, so does the rest of the tribe. Since the crucifixion, the crime of the Christ-killer is the crime of all Jews. 'His blood be on us and our children'. Overnight a mad man is born who thinks Jewish blood is water. Those Jews who escape with their lives live in memory's eternal pain (246).

Yakov Bok never knew Jesus before. In fact he "from childhood feared Jesus Christ as stranger, apostate, mysterious enemy of the Jews" (209). When boredom and curiosity grow deeper, he opens the New Testament which has been given by Zhitnyak and reads. Though he finds hard to concentrate, the story of Jesus fascinates him. When Kogin the prison guard listens to the cell, he overhears Bok's reading the Gospel. Then they both enter into a dialogue. They begin to test and weigh "the Christian against other system" (Fisch 164).
Kogin says: "All that blood and matzo business is an old part of your religion" (210). Bok replies that the "Hebrew scripture forbids the eating of blood." Like every Jew, Bok also is repugnant at the drinking of blood. But Kogin consoles saying that blood and bread are only metaphors. But Bok retorts: "Blood is blood. I said it the way it was written" (210). Bok purposely mentions this fact to show his relation with Christ. He is eager "to find out what a Christian is" (210). Malamud carefully parallels many of the events in the life of Jesus in the story of Bok. The dialogue continues:

'Blood is blood. I said it the way it was written.' 'How do you know it?' 'I read it in the Gospel of John.' 'What's a Jew doing reading the Gospels?' 'I read them to find out what a Christian is.' 'A Christian is a man who loves Christ.' 'How can anyone love Christ and keep an innocent man suffering in prison?' 'There is no innocent Christ-killer,' Kogin said, shutting the disk over the spy hole (210).

Here Malamud indirectly refers to the Holocaust and the blood-shed of the innocent Jews. Bok reads the Gospel as it has a relation to the world he lives in. Kogin on the other hand reads to enjoy it. He says: "I like to hear the words of Christ" (211). Bok always tries to find out some words from the Gospel for which he draws an analogy between his situation and the words of Christ. When Kogin wants to hear more words he reads: "which of you convicts me of sin?" (211) and again: "If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me?" (211). Bok here asks the same question, which Jesus asked Pilot, indirectly to guard Kogin. Bok again picks up the words suitable to his condition: "Judge not, that you be not judged" (211). By this time, Kogin is tired and he says, "I've had enough" (211). In the next chapter we see a priest visiting Bok. He is priest of the Orthodox Church who has been told that he reads the Gospels. If Bok agrees to forgive his enemies, repent and embrace the true faith, he will be saved, says the priest. But Bok does not seek forgiveness. In fact, he wants
vindication and the recognition of his truth and innocence. He rejects the priest's offer. Here he affirms his loyalty to his own people:

The Fixer stood mute.... "Where are you?" he called, blinking uneasily. He coughed with a heavy rasp. Yakov stood in the dim light, motionless at the table, the prayer shawl covering his head, the phylactery for the arm bound to his brow. The priest, coughing thickly, his handkerchief held to his mouth, retreated to the metal door and banged on it with his fist. It was quickly opened and he hurried out.(213)

Presently Bok is ready to take up the Hebrew Testament which is thrown into his cell after the New Testament is taken away. He searches for a different model. Malamud here weighs two different modes of reading and two different ways of applying myth to narrative. Yakov Bok, in the cell looks for consolation. The only consolation is the torn pages from a Hebrew scripture that is thrown into his cell. Yakov reads the Old Testament chapter by fragmentary chapter. He reads each letter with care, although often the words are incomprehensible to him. He has forgotten many he once knew, but in the reading and rereading some come back; some are lost forever. He also reads about the Hebrews doing business, fighting wars, sinning and worshipping. He is definitely excited by the stories of the Hebrews, but he cannot take in the central myth which depicts God as entering into a covenant with his people and with each prophet and patriarch in turn:

He covenants, therefore he is. He offers and Israel accepts, or when will history begin? Abraham, Moses, Noah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Ezra, even Job, make their personal covenant with the talking God. But Israel accepts the covenant in order to break it. That's the mysterious purpose: they need the experience. So
they worship false Gods; and this brings Yahweh up out of his Golden throne with a flaming sword in both hands. (216)

He reflects upon his reading. He thinks: The purpose of the covenant is to create human experience, although human experience baffles God (216). He cannot understand "God, Yahweh, the one who appears out of clouds, cyclone, burning bushes; talking" (217). Then he reflects on Spinoza's God "who says nothing; either he can't talk or has no need to" (217). Therefore Yakov Bok suffers without either the intellectual idea of God or the God of the covenant. Therefore he decides that his covenant is "with himself" (246).

Thus we see that The Fixer is inspired by the spirit of the Bible. Malamud has given the name “Bok” meaning “scapegoat” to evoke through Yakov Bok both Christ and the suffering servant of the Hebraic tradition. Bok becomes a scapegoat in a government plot to charge the Jews of Russia with the ritual murder of a Christian child. In Yiddish, Bok also means a piece of iron and this suggests Bok’s endurance. Shepsovich means son of a sheep. Therefore he is a victim, with the ability to endure. He suffers for the Jewish people, whom he symbolizes and undergoes unjust suffering. Another echo-pattern of the Hebraic allusion is that implied by the name Yakov which means Jacob. The name connects him with “Jacob, the third of the patriarchs,” who is also a “man of trouble” (Fisch 162).

In the short stories also we experience the picture of “the suffering servant.” In Angel Levine, Manischewitz assumes a somewhat larger posture as suffering servant. Thus he is a reenactment of the Biblical Job. Like Job, he too suffers the loss of his son and daughter. His store is burnt down. He and his wife fall prey to a terrible disease. Like Job he too is a religious man who finds his faith on trial. Manischewitz like Job hears God speaking through the whirlwind, and the Angel appears to him. He is on the verge of rebelling against God. As he does not believe the Angel Levine, He disappears and tells...
him to seek him in Harlem. At last when he finds him, "tears blinded the tailor's eyes. Was ever a man so tired? Should he say he believed a half-drunken Negro to be an Angel?" The silence slowly petrified. Manischevitz was recalling scenes of his youth as a wheel in his mind whirred: believe, do not, yes, no, yes, no" (55).

He passes through the depths of grief and suffering, a kind of redemptive suffering, and like Job reenacts the role of suffering servant. The moment he believes that the angel has been sent by God, his anguish ends. When he has the encounter with the Angel from God he is on the way to his redemption. He sees Levine mount heavenward on wings. He comes home to find his wife Fanny is up and doing. Manischevitz is filled with joy. His faith and trust in the angel as God-sent has saved him. He is reborn. Faith has triumphed over suffering. He learns through suffering. He is confirmed in faith. The sufferer turns into a believer. His quality like believing God and having faith in the God-sent angel leads him to higher perception. This quality has enlightened him to know that his plight is something more than a single individual can endure. That is why, overcome with the joy, he breaks out: "A wonderful thing. Fanny—Believe me, there are Jews everywhere"(56). He learns that Jews are everywhere. This suggests that he is aware of the universality of his experience of suffering. As Sidney Richman points out Malamud's characters are real as anyone can be but the reality depends more on the act of creation which extends beyond the reality into a peculiarly distorted reality which is the art of caricature in Malamud's instance. But his artistic touch transcends this reality and the distortion of caricature in to higher and larger dimension of allegory.

In "The Loan", Lieb, the baker, blinded by cataract and gray with sorrows appears in the novel. Nobody comes to buy his pastries and bread. The yeast was tears, he wept misery into the dough. Lieb here suffers for his family and undergoes the empathetic suffering in the Hebraic tradition.
Malamud caricatures him skilfully. Suddenly, as in a fairy tale, people begin to come from everywhere. At last he is successful but ill. His second wife Bessie, while serving the customers, notices the arrival of Lieb's skeletal friend Kobotsky with a face that "glittered with misery" (181) into the store. Forgetting the dispute over a debt, Leib welcomes him and begins to pour out his miseries. But with a shiver of apprehension, they realize that he has come for the money. Bessie in fury swirls about the room and recalls their predicaments and plights. Kobotskey, rising, prepares to leave. Before leaving he too pours out a tale of woe. As he catalogues his misery Bessie and Lieb both cry. Bessie now tells a tale which transforms the incipient sentimentality into a dreadful glance at demonic frustrations. She begins to weep and shake her head. She begins to blurt out the story of her afflictions:

How the Bolscheviki came when she was a little girl and dragged her beloved father into the snowy fields without his shoes; .... how when she was married a year, her husband, a sweet and gentle man, an educated accountant .... died of typhus in Warsaw; and how she, abandoned in her grief, years later found sanctuary in the home of an older brother in Germany, who sacrificed his own chances to send her, before the war, to America and himself ended, with wife and daughter, in one of Hitler's incinerators. (190)

The miseries of both Bessie and Kobotsky meet together and the suffering leads to compassion. They are ready to forgive and forget. Malamud says in the end that the loaves in oven turn into "charred corpses". Kobotsky and the baker embrace "and pressed mouths together and parted forever"(191). Kobotsky comes as a woe and goes as a friend thus elevating the story to a higher altitude.
In "Pimps Revenge", Fidelman learns through suffering. He is in Florence where he sculpts sorry-looking Madonnas for tourists and sells his figures for a pittance to enable him to paint his masterpiece, "Mother and Son," inspired by an old photograph of his mother and himself as a child. Then it becomes "brother and sister" after meeting a young prostitute named Esmeralda. She comes to live with him to escape her pimp Ludovica. Using Esmeralda as his model, he abandons his own painting, and paints instead the "prostitute and procurer." It is a masterpiece. But following the advice of Ludovico he retouches his masterpiece and ruins it. Fidelman here suffers for the art, as he makes this sacrifice for Ludovico. He finally learns the truth that the morality of art and the morality of life are inseparable.

"Black is My Favourite Colour," is a bitter tale of love and suffering. Nat Lime, a bachelor, has a liquor store in Harlem. All his life he deals with Negro people in genuine friendly terms. He lives with his sick mother. Nat broods over his past and remembers a black lonely boy, Buster Wilson, in the neighbourhood. He tries to be friendly with Buster who instead hits him in the teeth saying he is a Jew bastard. Years later Nat meets another black woman, Omita Haris, who visits his store every two weeks and they became friends and later fall in love. Once Nat is hit by two black men over the head. Omita visits him in the hospital. When he comes out, his mother is dead. He now pines for her and remembers his sweet days with her. When Nat proposes marriage to Omita she disposes and she is not willing to take up the trouble of marrying a Jew, and its consequences. Another time he tries to help a blind man. But he, though blind, recognizes him as a Jew. Out of empathy, he tries to do charity, but what he gets in turn is hit in the teeth. Love is offered generously but it is rebuffed with a violent blow or slap. In the end he comes to the realization that however empathetic he is, he cannot escape from his identity as he is a Jew and the 'Black' is a closed chapter to him. Nat's is thus a life in which persisting suffering is the outcome of his repeated efforts to establish relationships.
"The First Seven Years" anticipates most of the details of *The Assistant*. The aged Feld is the center of the story with his moral virtues, like Morris Bober in *The Assistant*. Feld lives for his daughter. He undergoes empathetic suffering true to in the Hebraic tradition. He is a shoemaker. His assistant, Sobel, loves his daughter Miriam. Like Morris Bober, Feld too excels in the I-thou relationship of Martin Buber and he lives in the Jewish experience, doing what is right and honest. But he too suffers on account of the values he keeps up in a materialistic world. Like Morris Bober, Feld appears as the victim of his own goodness. He spins daydreams and agonizingly remembers his youth in Shtetl. He aspires to give a better life to Miriam. But the dream does no good to him. Instead he is tortured by his relationships with Sobel who five years before, had saved Feld from ruin by becoming his assistant. Sobel in fact works for Feld only for love of Miriam. Without knowing the truth of their mutual love, Feld arranges a date for Miriam with a young promising accounting student. Sobel is infuriated and leaves the store. Feld is tortured for his dream of a better life for Miriam. When the budding accountant proves a thief, Feld is heart broken and is bedridden. Feld pushes himself to Sobel's tenement. Sobel declares his love for Miriam in tears. Here the denied self begins in pity, and compassion pours forth in a sanctified stream:

Watching him, the shoemaker's anger diminished. His teeth were on edge with pity for the man. And his eyes green moist. How strange and sad that a refugee, a grown man, bald and old with his miseries, who had by the skin of his teeth escaped Hitler's incinerators, should fall in love, when he had got to America, with a girl less than half his age. Day after day, for five years he had sat at his bench, cutting and hammering away, waiting for the girl to become a woman, unable to ease his heart with speech, knowing no protest but desperate. (15)
The crucial factor that unifies the different themes and concerns of *The Book of Job* is the Job figure, the character of Job. And one of the key strategies adopted by Malamud in his appropriation of these themes in fiction is that of evoking the character of Job through his fictional characters. *The Book of Job* tells the story of a good man overwhelmed with troubles and sufferings. He is an exact replica of the suffering servant of the Hebrew tradition. He is stripped of his wealth, his family and his health. A series of disasters hammer Job's prosperity into the dust. The final blow, the death of all his children, still leaves Job's faith in his God quite unshaken. In his suffering he says: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return; / The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; / blessed be the name of the Lord" (1:21). Job is smitten with a grievous illness. From Job's speeches we know that he suffered, among other things, painful pruritus (2:8), disfigurement (2:12), purulent sores that scab over, crack and ooze (7:5), sores infected with worms (7:5), fever with chills (21:6), darkening and shivering of the skin (30:30), eyes red and swollen from weeping (16:16), diarrhea (30:27), sleeplessness and delirium (7:4), choking (7:15), bad breath (19:17), emaciation (19:20), and excruciating pain throughout his body (30:17). All the more, the loneliness and the sense of being far away from God's favour are the most desperate feelings he suffered mentally. Job is seen as devoted and unquestioning servant of God.

In chapter 3, the author of the poetry of Job introduces Job with his celebrated plaint: "Better were it had I never been born!" (3:3). We see a different person in the protagonist of the poetry of Job from 3:1 to 42:6. Here Job is rebellious and later repentant and comes down from his devout and patient state to the human level. It is through the poetic Job that the real Job, the humanized Job emerges. In the chapter "In Search of the Real Job" in his *Job and Jonah* Bruce Wawter says that the author of *Job* recast the patient and devote Job of the prose section into the true Job in the poetry in which the humanization of Job takes place. For Judaism, Christianity and Islam, Job has
been a hero to be imitated. Job was thought to be a model of patience in the face of adversity. But in recent times Job the man has become a hero of another sort. Job as a model of patience has been replaced by the model of Job the rebel. Job has even been adopted by the existentialists. Today the Job who shakes his fist at the heavens in outrage and the Job who broods over the meaning of life is of more fascination than the older, more traditional view of Job. The reasons for the two contradictory models for the same literary figure lie in the structure of the Book of Job itself. In the prologue and epilogue, the book is basically in prose. In the prologue Job is patient and at the end of the divine speeches he surrenders to God, repenting in the end. From these sections of the book, the model of the patient Job is constructed. A different picture of Job is found in his laments and in his arguments with his friends. Here Job is not only impatient, but also rebellious. Jesse Nash in the article "Images of Job" says that there are three images of Job in The Book of Job: one of patience, one of impatience or rebellion, and one of repentance(29).

Job braves out three moments in his life: his suffering, his world and his God. In the book what we come across is the movement of Job from self-assured patience to open rebellion, and finally to repentance and reconciliation with God.

When Job is afflicted with sores over his body, he remains steadfast. To his goading wife, he retorts: "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? " (2:10). Job’s so called patience is maintained because of his conviction that whatever happens, good or bad, comes from God. Thus suffering is perceived as something to be endured. Later as Job’s patience ends, the prologue too ends. After the given-day period of mourning, which functions as a turning point in the dramatic action of the account, like a thunderclap Job’s lament is heard. His pain is visibly unbearable. Next starts his poetic lamentations from which the real Job emerges. He debates with his friends. Still, Job does not curse God, rather he curses the gift of life. He curses the day of his birth and the night of his conception: “Let the day
perish wherein I was born, and the night which said, ‘a man child is conceived’” (3:3). His friends protest his outburst. Life is a gift from God, and it is sacred to the wisdom people. Actually Job’s outburst is out of character for him. Job’s patience and wisdom crumble before his pain. He is not being true to form. He becomes rebellious and argues with his friends. Claiming that he has not sinned, he argues that he does not deserve to suffer in such a way (6:10). His outbursts are directed against God as well: “Why hasn’t thou made me the mark? Why have I become a burden to thee?” (7:20). Being bold in his anger, he is ready to argue face to face with God to defend himself. His intense suffering causes him to question the very God he worshipped in the prologue. This is crucial, because on it hinges the model of Job the rebel. Becoming more rebellious, he even questions the rationale behind punishing sinners: "If sin, what do I do to Thee, Thou watcher of men?” (7:20). Job’s sense of self is shattered by the greeting he gets from his social world. His friends wrongly associate his affliction with sin. His affliction has ostracized him from his natural acquaintances (19:13-19). Worst of all, he says: “I am repulsive to my wife” (19:17). The motivation for his curse lies in the agonizing questions about his being allowed to live in order to experience the pain. His agony is so intense that he asks God to turn the darkness into night and wishes to have the day of his birth removed from the world. Job says:

Turn that day into darkness, God/Never again remember that day:/ never again let light shine on it:/ make it day of gloom and thick darkness:/ cover it with clouds, and blot out the sun:/ blot that night out of the year/ and never let it be counted again:/ make it a barren joyless night.(3:2-7)

In agony he asks “Why did I not die at birth?” (3:11). If he had been given no breath, he would have expired as he came from the womb. He would simply have been transported from the womb to the grave. In holding the
newborn the parents bind themselves to the child, signifying their acceptance of the infant and the responsibility of raising the baby. Rick D. Moore in the article “The Integrity of Job” in the journal The Catholic Biblical Quarterly says: “With acts of extreme mourning Job reveals his sense of loss (24). Job once again wishes that he had been discarded, left to die unattended. He says:

I wish I had died in my mother’s womb/ or died the moment I was born/ Why did my mother hold me on her knees?/ Why did she feed me at her breast?/ If I had died then, I would be at rest now,/ sleeping like the kings and rulers/ who built ancient palaces./ Then I would be sleeping like princes/who filled their houses with gold and silver,/ or sleeping like a still – born child.(3:11-16)

This God-fearing man is characterized as wretched, and miserable and bitter of soul in the poetic section. Such a fate makes him so sour that he finds no joy in living. Job expresses his ardent longing for inner rest. He asks in extreme agony why light is given to him. The “light” connotes, in part, human consciousness. For Job, light is bitter gift which leads him only to long for a greater treasure, the “royal future” of death. The light of a beautiful day only makes him more aware of his sorrows and increases his longing for death. Job says:

Why is light given to him that is in misery,/ and life to the bitter in soul, who long for death,.. who rejoice exceedingly,/ and are glad, when they find the grave? Why is light given to a man whose way is hid,/ whom God has hedged in? For my shrieks come as my break;/ my groanings pour out like water.
What I most dreaded has come on me, and what I feared befalls me.(3:20-26)
The word "way" refers to his destiny. That "it is hid" means in his present plight his life has no purpose. The losses that have befallen him have undercut any sense of meaning he has for life and left him frustrated and miserable. Light and life, God's greatest gifts to any person only serve to increase his despair beyond measure. Job imagines that God has surrounded him with a fence so that he cannot find any way of escape from his predicament and no help can reach him. To Job, it appears that God has locked him into turmoil. Job bemoans his pain. He attacks his comforters with harsh words. Job begins to focus on his suffering. He mourns that his sorrow is greater than that of the common labourers. He is fed up with tossing and turning in the night which passes slowly. In the morning he finds that worms have bred in his sores:

Human life is like forced army service, like a life of hard manual labour, like slave longing for cool shade; like a worker waiting for his pay. Month after month I have nothing to live for; night after night brings me grief. When I lie down to sleep, the hours drag; I toss all night and long for dawn. My body is full of worms; it is covered with scabs; pus runs out of my sores. My days pass by without hope. (7:1-6)

The poetic dialogue opens in *The Book of Job* with Job's bitter lament about his grievous calamities (3:1-26). Eliphaz, the first of the friends to respond, offers not a single word of consolation, but instead asks a question based on traditional doctrine: "Is not your piety your assurance,/ Your hope your perfect conduct?" (4:6). Because Job in his opening lament bemoans his plight in graphic and passionate language and images, Eliphaz states: "Impatience kills the fool,/ And indignation slays the simpleton" (5:2). But Job in his reply, appeals for sympathy and compassion from his friends who are quick to judge and condemn him as a sinner because of his guilt. Job
pleads: "A friend owes kindness to one in despair./ Though he have forsaken
the fear of the almighty" (6:14). Job no longer considers himself a real person
with needs and feelings, because his friends have reduced him to a thing, a
"byword," an "object lesson." He complains: "I am made a byword of the
people,/ Their object lesson I have become" (1:6). The painful experience of
Job who is described as "upright" in 1:1,8, and 2, contradicts the traditional
teaching. Yet Job replies to Bildad's recital of traditional theology: "I know
that it is so;/ But how can a person be justified before God ?" Job also
confesses:

God pass bye, but I cannot see him./ He takes what he wants,
and no one can stop him;/ no one dares ask him; "What are
you doing?/ God's anger is constant. ...How can I find words
to answer God?/ Though I am innocent, all I can do is beg for
mercy from God, my judge./ yet even then, if he lets me
speak/ I can't believe he would listen to me. (9:12-16)

Yet Job argues with God, vigorously. When one suffers extreme
grief, one does not speak or act in a logical or consistent manner. Job thus
represents everyman who suffers intensely for no discernible reason. Job then
exclaims that God can negate the expectations of the religious establishment
(12:13-25). Job concludes: "I want to speak with the Almighty ;/ I wish to
reason with God" (13:3). Eliphaz argues that suffering is retribution for
wrongdoing and his central premise is that everyone is guilty. From this
premise, he derives two basic arguments. First he says the righteous prosper
and the wicked suffer hardship, which is the law of retribution; "Think now,
who that was innocent ever perished/ Or where were the upright cut off/ As I
have seen, those who plough iniquity /And sow trouble reap the same" (4:7-8).
Bildad's argument is that God's ways are just and justice is the cornerstone of
God's relationship with humanity. So he states that whoever experiences
calamity has sinned. Thus he exhorts Job to seek God eagerly: "How long will
you speak such things and the words of your mouth be a mighty wind? ... If you will seek God and make supplication to the Almighty, if you are pure and upright, surely then he will rouse himself for you and reward you with a rightful habitation" (8:3-6). Zophar says that people are either contrite worshippers of God or arrogant sinners and he sees little possibility that Job might be upright, free from wrong. He adds that God punishes him for only part of his wrong doing, no for all of it. Thus he concludes that Job has sinned even beyond the extent of his punishment: "When he passes by and imprisons and summons the assembly, who can restrain him? Indeed, he knows false men; yea, he sees wrongdoing and he takes close notice of it" (11:6-11). Bildad in his speech says that he sees a connection between human contrition and divine rewards. He motivates Job to seek God. The righteous behaviour is rewarded with prosperity; “And though your beginning was small, your latter days will be very great”(8:7). But Job rejects their advice with disgust. He is very near to death. Intense suffering has enveloped him. He says: “Before I go whence I shall not return, /to the land of gloom and deep darkness, the land of gloom and chaos,/ where light is as darkness” (10:21-22). Job has demanded that God appear to him and answer him. Job wants to enter into a litigation with God. But his case never comes to the docket of the court, he endures punishment. The delay of his trial is a grave injustice. He pleads that the Heavenly judge would give his case a hearing.

Job gives vent to the deep agitation of his inner reveries. He utters despair and frustration at the lack of insight into the reasons for his plight. In his quest, Job uses legal language. He ponders the possibility of challenging his plaintiff, God. Job wants to enter into a debate in order that the hostility of God against him may be ended. Job reflects on how he would respond to God’s presence. He anticipates that he would neither see him nor perceive his presence. Here he utters the lines: "Lo, he passes by me, and I see him not; / he moves on, but I do not perceive him”(9:11). Job, annoying his friends, blames God for his plight. Frustrated, he complains that God is punishing him
brutally. Job says that God is acting capriciously, having no grounds to punish him. He doubts the justice of God's action in permitting him to suffer. God allows him to be tested in a way that leads Job to question the very basis of his faith, namely that God is just and good. Therefore specifically Job says: "He crushes me with a tempest, / and multiplies my wounds without cause; he will not let me get my breath/ but fills me with bitterness" (9:17).

Job tries his best to make the friends understand his plight. He expresses his anguish. Feeling alienated, he bemoans his miserable physical condition. He is so weak that he says; "I have escaped with the skin of my teeth"(19:20). Job requests the comforters to share the weight of his suffering. It has been made unbearable by his complete estrangement from the community. He wants them to understand that the cause of his suffering is not his fault but the hand of God that has stricken him. He thinks that they can show him mercy if they understand him well. Job is looking forward to getting someone to support him in bringing his complaint to God. Job searches earnestly for some way to defend his integrity. Fearful that he might die before his honour is restored, he wishes that his words be preserved forever by being inscribed on a stone monument. The contents of the inscription in his mind are his declaration of innocence, his affirmation of trust in God and his appeal for vindication. Job says that “I know that my redeemer lives, and at last he will stand upon the earth”(19:25). He is sure that his redeemer will come to his defense. He wants to see God’s appearance to vindicate him. He believes that God will restore Job’s honour before it is too late. In this way Job’s confidence in God as his redeemer amidst excruciating suffering stands as a model. Thus Job says: “And after my skin has thus destroyed/then from my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see on my side,/ and my eyes shall behold, and not another”(19:26-27). Job laments God’s cruel treatment. Job’s anger is so intense that he perceives that god is his enemy. Job portrays God to be like a wild animal voraciously tearing its prey in assaults. When it backs away, it snarls at its prey. Its eyes are fixed on its
prey. Like this, God enjoys tearing his victim. Instead of punishing the wicked, God has tossed him into the hands of the wicked. The attack is sudden and surprising. Like a strong man God seizes him by the nape of the neck and administers a torturous beating:

He has torn me in his wrath, and hated me; he has gnashed his teeth at me; my adversary sharpens his eyes against me / ... he seized me by the neck and dashed me to pieces;/he set me up as his target, his archers surround me. He pierces my kidneys without pity; he spills my gall on the ground. He rends me breach on breach; he rushes at me like a warrior (16:9, 11-14)

Job further says that injustice, suffering and abuse abound in the city. In the street men lie dying, killed in an act of violence. The victims groan and cry out for help and for vengeance against their attackers. But God does not respond to these cries: “From pot of the city the dying groan, and the soul of the wounded cries for help; Yet God pays no attention to their prayer” (24:12).

Job gains some composure and raises certain questions which are basic to the questions of theodicy. He says that when God ruins the world, he unjustly makes an end of both the "blameless and the wicked" and he lets them struggle until they die. Job continues the questions and says that God gives a nation into the power of the wicked. They torture their subjects and exploit the land for their vain glory. He concludes by saying that injustices exist throughout the land and God is the cause of injustices. Answering Job’s question of theodicy, both Elihu and the Yahweh speeches address the issue of God’s being just. Elihu says that God uses suffering as rods of discipline to make man upright and just: “Behold, in this you are not right. I will answer you. God is greater than man” (33:12). He says that God speaks
to a person in many different ways on many occasions to prevent him from going astray. God uses the discipline of pain to turn one from the error. God afflicts a person to awaken him to the seriousness of his situation. He says: "He may turn man aside from his deed, and cut off pride from man" (33:17). God's purpose is both preventive—to keep a person from down to the grave—and affirmative to illumine his life with the true light. So that he may live a rich, full and meaningful life; "behold, God does all these things, twice, three times, with a man, to bring back his soul from the pit, that he may see the light of life" (33:29-30). Elihu exhorts Job to accept God's disciplining of him so that he can have his power and pelf restored. From Elihu's viewpoint that which has befallen Job is God's merciful way of leading him out of some hidden error. So God has acted justly in his case.

In the article "In Search of Real Job" in Job and Jonah, Bruce Wawter says that pain is often an instrument of God's Mercy (47). So Elihu directs his attention to the purpose of suffering rather than trying to discover its origin. Elihu portrays God as mercifully just in all his dealings, arguing that he has nothing to gain by acting unjustly (35). Since Job has doubted that God rules the world in righteousness, God affirms that he has structured the world exactly as his blueprints. God refutes any theory that injustice and suffering exist because God is in a struggle with a strong foe (38:16-24). God argues for his wise management of the world by pointing to his ordering of the heavenly elements and his care of the wild animals (38:25-29:30). In questioning Job intently about the created order and the creatures Behemoth and Leviathan, symbols of hostile forces, God brings Job to the realization that no human beings can judge the course of the universe. Thus he proves that he rules the world in justice. The sense of "innocence" pervades the Book of Job as Yakov in The Fixer declares his innocence and it has been the ground of Job's truth too. Job has become exasperated at the friends counsel. Job therefore swears to his innocence. He affirms his innocence with a complex oath. The foundation of Job's faith in God is his personal
conviction that he has been blameless in his relations with God and human beings. He backs up his oath with a resolution that he will hold to his righteousness:

As long as my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is my nostrils; my lips will not speak falsehood, and my tongue will not utter deceit. Far be it from me to say that you are right; till I die I will not put away my integrity from me. I hold fast my righteousness, and I will not let it go; my heart does not reproach me for any of my days. (27:3-6)

Chapters 29, 30 and 31 show Job’s avowal of innocence. His oath forces the issue, for the oath compels God either to clear him or to activate the curses. For if God continues to remain silent, that would be a confirmation of his innocence and the entire community would be convinced that he is innocent. Job begins his avowal of innocence with a description of his former stature in the community. He then had intimate fellowship with God. He had all the blessings of God. But now he is reduced to the status of a slave. Therefore in despair, he swears an oath of innocence in chapter 31: “I have walked with falsehood, and my foot has hastened to deceit; let me be weighed in a just balance, and let God know my integrity!” (31:5-6).

Job is considered “the archetypal suffering Jew,” chosen to suffer. “Why me?” is Job’s anguished question. Job in chapter 7 laments his fate. He cries over the physical agony and moans the cruelty of humanity in general. Job feels that his fate is comparable to the hardship borne by one who spends his strength in working for another person (7:1-2). Then he pleads with God to hear his case. He has taken a giant step of the way that will lead him to set his complaint against God. Job asks: “why dost thou hide thy face, and count me as thy enemy?” (13:24). Job thinks that God treats him, a frail object, so savagely. He feels as if he is “a driven leaf” or like “a dry chaff” (13:25) as the guard “chafed Yakov’s flesh” (23). He describes his present predicament as that of a prisoner closely confined and constantly watched. His feet are put
in “stocks” and his “paths” are watched (13:27). In prison Yakov gets his “legs locked in the stocks” (236). Frustrated, Job pleads:

Let me alone, for my days are a breath. / What is man, that thou dost make so much of him,/ and that thou dost set thy mind upon him, dost visit him every morning/ and test him every moment? / How long wilt thou not look away from me, nor let me alone till I swallow my spittle? Why have you made me your mark so that I have become a burden to you? (7:16-20)

The temptation to seek death becomes strong in Job too as it becomes strong in Yakov. His suffering is so great that he wants to die. The alienation that his affliction caused is so great that his wife asks him: “Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God, and die” (2:9). In chapter 10, Job wishes for nothing more than death: “My soul loathes life” (10:1). In his anguish he asks: “Why is light given to him that is in misery,/ and life to the bitter in soul, who long for death, but it causes not,/ and dig for it more than for hid treasures” (3:20-21). Job is prepared to die; he longs for death. But “the light” is given to him. So he can’t die. There is a tremendous obligation before him. He has to suffer and live since “the life” is given to the “bitter in soul”. As Job demands a face to face showdown with God, God does appear. He asks some questions of his own. God takes Job for a whirlwind tour of the universe. God literally sings a hymn of praise to the ostrich, the hippopotamus, the wild ass, the wild ox, and even Leviathan and the crocodile which are the wonders that attest to God’s glory and power. The divine speeches force Job to realize that he is not the center of the universe and that humans are not the only concerns God has. Job’s rebellion is against his world and his God. God appears and shows him how little Job actually knows and understands. To demand to know the reason for suffering is, to ask for more than is possible for humans. But God does not give him an answer.
He confirms that a person’s first obligation is not to understand but to give glory to the creator, come what may. God in his confrontation with Job, never addresses the problem of the suffering of the righteous, or even the problem of ordinary living, both of which come to frustrate Job. Further, God in the speeches accepts the world as his creation. Job is overwhelmed and concludes, “Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer thee?”(40:4).

And finally, “I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees thee; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes”(42:2-6).

By these utterings Job seems to say that he quits in shame; he wants to be neither God nor human. Gerald Janzen J. maintains that Job’s affirmation of himself as “dust” can be seen as an act in which the royal vocation of humanity—the royal vocation to become humanity—is accepted and embraced with all its vulnerability to innocent suffering...To be dust in God’s image is to enjoy and to be responsible for the order manifest in creation; it is to enjoy and be responsible for the freedom which is also manifest in the events of the world and which resides by God’s gift in the human soul.(257-259)

What is striking here is that Job is not reduced to nothing. He has become instead what he truly is, a human being, a creature made of dust, living before God in a real world that no longer needs to be sustained by a fantasy. And he takes comfort in that. Job repents, and learns to surrender and to trust the God he loves, and love the God he trusts. In the end God praises Job and says that Job has spoken correctly of God(42:7). By his repentance, Job accepts God in spite of unanswered questions. In the repentant Job, in the humanization of Job, lies a model more challenging than those of Job the patient man or the rebel. Yahweh seeks to convince Job that he created the world in wisdom and that he governs it wisely, in justice and with compassion. He asserts that he rules supreme over the world he has created. He knows and control all the recesses of the universe. No area is
beyond his governance. Yahweh then raises the key question "Does he have to agree that Yahweh is guilty of governing the world unjustly in order to prove his own innocence?" Now Job surrenders. He says: "I know that thou canst do all things; and that no purpose of thine can be thwarted /......../ therefore I despise myself / and repent in dust and ashes"(42:1,6). After all the suffering Job is rewarded. Job is redeemed when God speaks to him out of the storm wind. Job had asked him to speak: "Let me speak, and do thou reply to me"(13:22). He is bold and it is paid off. God answers. It is this answer which makes Job's suffering endurable and meaningful.

Most of Malamud's novels and stories contain Jewish characters who must come to suffering and finally must be redeemed. The Job figure in its various aspects appears in the different fictional works. In The Assistant, over and over we find echoed the agonized strain of Job's unanswered question: “Why is light given to a man whose way is hid, and whom god hath hedged in?” Malamud in his fiction has given eloquent voice to Job's anguished and rebellious cry from the ash-heap. Job rebels and accepts simultaneously and he keeps a firm grip on his precious individuality. Malamud's characters also cry out, defy and accept. Job is characterized as having a pure heart and a dynamic, active faith in God. Malamud's protagonists Morris Bober and Frank Alpine are simple souls who have enough "light" to see the miseries of others. Morris Bober keeps up his law and individuality. Frank Alpine too thinks of his hero, St. Francis Assissi. They both are good at heart. Bober often thinks of his only son, Epharaim, who died very young. Morris Bober, in spite of Ida's remarks, allows Frank to stay in the store He says: "He is a poor boy. I feel sorry for him." Often he exhorts him to be good and honest. He is the Rabbi and Frank is the spiritual son. He is the master; Frank, the novice.

The dark cramped places and the claustrophobic containments Bober and Frank Alpine live in, take on symbolic resonance. Morris Bober, being a Jew with all the hard responsibilities entailed thereby, lives in the tomb-like
“What kind of man did you have to be,” wonders Frank Alpine, “to be born to shut yourself in an overgrown coffin?” Frank also lives in confinement and is on his way to a tight prison: “with me one wrong thing leads to another and it ends in a trap.” They both are burdensome images of loneliness--weighed down by poverty, commercial greed and calamities. Yet like Job, “light” is given to them. They are endowed with a glimpse of infinity, of freedom of existence without barriers. With Morris Bober, it is a felt sense of the Law. With Frank Alpine, it is a good conscience filled with St. Francis’ memory. They have enough light in their darkness to know that their ways are “hid.” They are also capable of imagining a life of light even though they know such a life is not possible for them. Frank Alpine’s glimpse of light awakes in him a sensitivity to the miserable life he has lived in the past. He says that his life has been a funny one. He has been close to some wonderful things like job, education and woman, but he never gets it fully. Everything he thinks worth having gets away from him. He says: “I work like a mule for what I want, and just when it looks like I am going to get it I make some kind of a stupid move, and everything that is just about nailed down tight blows up in my face” (36).

Though Frank doesn’t have a good past, and nothing to look forward to, he tries to come out of the fatal limitations of his condition Frank’s loneliness burdens him. He comes out of the “cellar”. He exhorts himself to be honest. When Ida doesn’t approve of his staying in the store Morris Bober says: “We can’t afford to keep him, but we can’t afford to lose him, on account he might improve more the business if he stays” (78). Finally, Frank totally and with all his heart and soul enters into the “I-thou” relationship of Morris Bober. After the Passover he becomes a Jew breaking his darkness, the prison. He comes out of his darkness, the “cellar”, to the store or comes out of his darkness to “light”. Like Job, Morris Bober too is the leader as the head of his family. When he sees that his daughter has no comfortable room, he comes down to her room. He sits with sad eyes saying nothing. When she and her
brother were kids, he used to take them to see a Yiddish play or take the family visiting on Jewish holidays. He feels sympathy for her. He gives her a five-dollar bill. He says: "What did I ever give you? Even your college education I took away." "My child," he sighed, "for myself I don't care, for you I want the best but what did I give you?" (20:21). Job's anguished cry is heard over and over in the book. Once Morris notices that bottles of milk and rolls are missing from the store. Later Morris catches Frank Alpine red-handed. Frank later says:

"Nobody has any responsibility to take care of but myself. I couldn't find any job. I used up every last cent I had. My coat is too thin for this cold and lousy climate. The snow and the rain get in my shoes so I am always shivering. Also, I had no place to sleep that's why I came down here." (50-51)

Frank has a lot of complaints to make. Job's anguished cry is echoed in these anguished utterings of Frank Alpine. In the end, we see Frank too repents of his crime and wayward life. He comes to the realization that there is meaning in life, if there is suffering and sacrifice. Morris Bober is the victim of a universe beyond his control, he is in anguish to the point of despair because his life, which he deems of value, evokes only indifference or hostility. His misery implies his insignificance and his irrelevance, the sheer gratuitousness of what he is and what he endures. He is a true Malamudian sufferer cast in the form of Job:

He recalled the bad times he had lived through, but now times were worse than in the past; now they were impossible. His store was always a marginal one, up today, down tomorrow -- as the wind blew. Overnight business could go down enough to hurt .... It had got worse as the neighbourhood had. Yet even a year ago,
staying open seven days a week, sixteen hours a day, he could still eke out a living. What kind of living? -- a living; you lived. Now though he toiled the same hard hours, he was close to bankruptcy, his patience torn. (11)

Yakov Bok contains elements like the disease of poverty, a vulnerability of body and soul to the vicissitudes of foul fortune etc. The poor fixer as ‘suffering servant’ is a reenactment of the archetype Job. The circumstances through which Yakov Bok passes are seen in Job. Similarly Shmuel judges and rebukes the miserable sufferer. But he is more gentle than the friends of Job in rebuking. Harold Fisch, in his article “Biblical Archetypes in The Fixer” says : “The central topic as well as the main controlling pattern in the dialogue and the scene undoubtedly come from The Book of Job” (167). Their conversation parallels the dialogue of Job and his comforters:

“You see, Yakov, what happens when you shave your beard and forget your God?” “Don’t talk to me about God,” Yakov said bitterly. “I want no part of God. When you need him most he’s farthest away. Enough is enough. My past I don’t have to tell you, but if you knew what I’ve lived through since I saw you last.” He began to say but his voice cracked. “Yakov,” said Shmuel, clasping and unclasping his excitable hands, “we’re not Jews for nothing. Without God we can’t live. Without the covenant we would have disappeared out of history. Let that be a lesson to you. He’s all we have but who want more?” “Me! I’ll take misery but not forever. For misery don’t blame God. He gives the food but we cook it. I blame him for not existing. Or if he does it’s on the moon or stars but not here. The thing is not to believe or the waiting becomes unbearable. I can’t hear his voice and never have. I don’t need him unless he appears.” (230-31)
Shmuel is a God-fearing person, and like Job’s friends, he exhorts Yakov to turn to God. According to Shmuel, Yakov should be content and recognize God as his Lord and master. He should not wait for God’s reply or his appearance. He says: “If you don’t hear his voice, so let him hear yours. When prayers go up, blessings descend”(231). Yakov in The Fixer is exactly Job-like. In the dialogue Shmuel shows up Job as a model to Yakov. Later on in the same conversation, the topic of discussion is The Book of Job itself:

‘Yakov’, said Shmuel, ‘He invented light. He created the world. The true miracle is belief. I believe in him. Job said, ‘Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.’ He said more but that’s enough. To win a lousy bet with the devil he killed off all the servants and innocent children of Job. For that alone, I hate him, not to mention ten thousand pogroms. Ach, why do you make me talk fairy-tale? Job is an invention and so is God. Let’s let it go at that.(232)

Like Job, Yakov does not nourish the idea of being a hero. But like Job, he too says that he can suffer misery. But it should have a limit: “I’ll take misery but not forever”(230). Then he says that his only worry is that God does not come to him in the dire need of his suffering. He seems to be “on the moon or stars but not here”. For Job too in his utter difficulty and misery God is not seen anywhere. He is just a “God above”(3: 4). The waiting for Yakov “becomes unbearable”(231). He says that he has never heard “his voice”(231) as his forefathers had heard his voice in “the clouds, cyclones and burning bushes”(217). Therefore he takes courage and demands that God come down and grant him an interview: “I don’t need him unless he appears”(231).

Harold Fisch points out that Yakov’s reaction is the same as Job’s retorts to “the complacent pieties of the friends”(168). Yakov pities Job.
According to him God has simply killed the innocent children of Job only to win a lousy bet with the devil. Then Yakov rejects the Job figure as a fairy-tale. In fact “he is through that very rejection confirming his identity for us as a Job-figure” (Fisch 168). After an opening complaint, Job bewails his miserable lot. His deep personal sorrow continues to echo throughout his lamenting. In his present plight the pious words of the comforters increase his sorrow. Therefore he accuses his friends of being “miserable comforters” (16: 1). Yakov too finds “miserable comforters” in Shmuel, Kogin and the orthodox Priest. Job speculates about how he would act if their places were reversed. He would speak with God and show more sympathy. He would utter supportive words. Job says that he has expected more consolation than he has received. The lines “Lo, he passes by me, and I see him not; / he moves on, but I do not perceive him” (Job 9: 11) have their parallel in Yakov’s “when you need him most, he’s farthest away.”

Job’s faith in God is so deep that he says: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him.” But for a moment Yakov rejects Job’s idea. For Yakov, Job becomes an invention. “Job is an invention and so is God” (232). He rejects the Job-figure as a fairy-tale. Fisch asks: “Are we to suppose therefore that the Job model like the Gospel teaching is introduced into the narrative to be scrutinized, utilized for what it can yield, and then summarily dismissed?” (168). Malamud does want the readers to scrutinize the Job model. Job is portrayed as a simple and edifying picture of a moral hero and patient saint. His faith in God remains undimmed through tribulations and the real theme of the work is undoubtedly “the fortitude of a good man under testing” (The Interpreters Commentary 240). The Book of Job deals with the problem of suffering, especially innocent suffering and its meaning. Malamud in The Fixer too depicts the fortitude of a good man, who is innocent, under testing. His subject here is the problem of suffering, innocent suffering. At the same time both Job and Yakov express their rebellion in the intensity of their suffering.
As the Job-motif is fore-grounded by way of rejection in the novel *Breakdown and Bereavement* (1920) by Yosef Haim Brenner, the denial of Job-figure by Yakov Bok in *The Fixer* only serves to testify the unmistakable power of the Job-figure. Job, many times shows a tendency to resist God, but the very resistance confirms his need of God. Job apparently rejects God and says: “God gives me up to the ungodly ... where then is my hope? Who will see my hope?” (17: 15). At the same time he confirms the idea of God; “Behold, God is great” (36: 26). Therefore Harold Fisch says:

To understand how Yehezkel Hefetz and Yakov Bok become most Job-like when they deny the authority of that book, we need to look again at the Job-model itself. For whilst this poem may function as a powerful literary Archetype, indeed as myth, especially for modern writers, the constant tendency of Job himself in his speeches is to resist any religious attitude which has hardened into dogma or myth. The friends argue for all kinds of well-established views of the shape of human destiny, of theodicy. (169)

Shmuel proposes solutions to the mystery of human existence and of God’s justice. He gives the story of Job as a model to follow. As Yakov rejects the idea of Job, “he [Shmuel] will have Job against him!” (Fisch 170). The major chapters of *Job* depict the prolonged endurance and suffering. That is true of *The Fixer* as well. In the Book of Job and *The Fixer*, there is a kind of striving, hope and a goal. In *The Fixer* Yakov Bok lives because he hopes for a day when he is vindicated in public. He spends most of the time in the jail waiting eagerly and impatiently for his indictment to be delivered to him. The readers are also held by this expectation without the interest flagging. We are gripped by a sort of sense of an ending. This Joban passage echoes
through the whole novel. “I’ll live, he shouts in his cell, I’ll wait, I’ll come to my trial” (247).

Yakov Bok constantly asks for his indictment. He too, like Job, would treasure it as his most precious possession. He is frustrated when Grubeshov withholds the promised indictment and demands to sign a confession. The warden delivers a message from Grubeshov to Yakov in his cell. He is taken to the courthouse. Yakov thinks that he will be given the indictment. But what happens in the courthouse startles him. Grubeshev bangs his fist on the desk and asks Yakov to confess the guilt. But he knows that a confession would doom him forever, and expresses his wish to see the indictment.

Yakov's desire for indictment and trial shows another aspect of the Job-figure. As in Job, it is the confidence about his innocence that prompts Yakov to face the trial. In the dialogue between Shmuel and Yakov, when Shmuel accuses him of being selfish, unloving and ungodly, but Yakov says: “I did nothing. It was a gift. I’m innocent” (10). This is the only ground that he pulls on with his life. Chapter 31, where Job utters his great oath of integrity is, “the moral climax of the book” (Fisch 171). Job requests that God weigh him in the scale of justice as a proof of his integrity. In the wisdom tradition a balance symbolizes God’s precise testing of human motives. Confident of his innocence, Job is certain this test would convince God of his integrity and blameless character. He repeats later on: “I have nothing more to say except that I am innocent” (128). When Yakov is forced to sign the confession, he shouts hoarsely: “I am innocent” (204).” As he repeats this simple affirmation it takes on a transcendent quality” (Fisch 171). So finally he shouts out his innocence to the horseman riding beside the carriage that takes him to the law court: “Innocent!” The fixer cries out to him. “Innocent!” (294). He says to the chairman of the jury:
"I’m innocent," ... "you can look at me and see. Look in my face and say whether a man like me, whatever also he might do, could kill a boy and drain the blood out of his body. If I have any humanity in my heart, and you are men you must know it." (295)

In Job’s last avowal too we see that the repetition takes on a transcendent quality. His confidence has grown so strong that he enumerates specific sins that he has not done. He has lived by the highest moral standard, concerned not only with his acts but more importantly with his attitudes and motives. The clarity of his conviction reveals that he has risen above his deep despair. He has not let the bitterness and anger of his sorrow drive him to utter despair. Likewise Yakov Bok too rises above his sufferings by declaring his innocence repeatedly. Job even challenges God to show where he has gone wrong. He is not ready to surrender on the principle that he may be guilty, and therefore he is confident that he will be ultimately rewarded. Yakov too never surrenders on the accusation that he is guilty of killing an innocent boy. Both Yakov and Job refuse to yield. As Job ultimately gets rewarded, Yakov Bok too is rewarded finally.

Another all pervading feature that is found both in The Book of Job and in The Fixer is the sense of the “chosen.” As with Job the sense of being “chosen” is a “magnificent obsession” for Yakov too. Despite his desires and requests, he wants to be alone:

‘It’s all fantasy’, the fixer muttered. ‘He doesn’t need me and I don’t need him. Why don’t they let me alone? What have I truly done to them?’ His fate nauseated him. Escaping from the pale he had at once been entrapped in prison. From birth a black horse had followed him, a Jewish nightmare. What was
being a Jew but an everlasting curse? He was sick of their history, destiny, blood guilt. (206)

He repeatedly asks himself and others “why me?”(281). He sits in the dark cell--sometimes runs in the cell, beating his chest, waving his arms, slapping hands together and crying in anguish. Again and again he asks “Why me?” He asked himself for the ten thousandth time. "Why did it have to happen to a poor, half ignorant fixer?”(281). It seems, he has been chosen to save the fat Russian and to get attracted by the crippled daughter. To be kind to an anti-Semitic and then to suffer for it, is his special fate. The words of Yakov Bok at the special and welcome interest of the Tsar on him are taken straight from Job: “He doesn’t need me and I don’t need him. Why don’t they let me alone?”(206). The same anguish is echoed in Psalm 8: “What is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou dost care for him?”(8: 4). Here the Psalmist is overwhelmed by God’s interest on such a wormy creature like man who is just dust and ashes. Job instead rejects such interest shown in him by God and says “let me alone”(7: 19). Yakov bitterly rejects the idea of “chosen”. When Ostrovsky consoles him saying “You suffer for us all. I would be honoured to be in your place”(273), Yakov sarcastically retorts: “It’s without honour, ... It’s a dirty suffering”(273).

The same death-temptation of Job is seen in Yakov. His sufferings and tortures becomes beyond endurance. He cherishes a secret pleasure in the thought of his death and the knowledge that it is in his power to bring it about. “The Fixer is chained to the wall all day”(236) giving to the mind a picture of Jesus, scourged at the pillar. Yakov cannot sleep. If he sleeps, the slightest movement of his body awakens him. When the preparation for the crucifixion in under way, Jesus is stripped of his garments, his flesh is torn, and his body is cut fiercely. The same way Yakov too is stripped off for the “searches”(237). He is tortured until he feels like dying: “In chains all that
was left of freedom was life, just existence; but to exist without choice was the same as death" (240). He begins to develop the thought of death:

He had secret, almost pleasurable thoughts of death, had had from the time he had stolen Zhitnyak’s needle. He had thought, if I want to die sometime I can use the needle to cut my veins. He could do it after Kogin left, and bleed all night. In the morning they would find a corpse. He had these thoughts more intensely now. After a while all he thought of was death .... His death would mean there was one last choice, there always is and he had taken it. (240)

Later he dismisses this thought of death not because he is afraid to die, but because of the thought that he will lose a chance to die for his fellow Jews. If he dies, he will be betraying Shmuel and others. So he decides to live on and await his trial. He begins to think a phrase from the gospel: “He who endures to the end well be saved” (Matt 10: 22). Suffering enlightens him to live for the oppressed Jew. Finally he too like Job emerges victorious.

Thus Job-model is a key to Malamud’s novel as a whole. “It is in fact a privileged source of authority” (Fisch 170). The heightening of experience that we come across in The Book of Job is experienced in The Fixer too. This experience is pervasive in the details of the narrative as well as in the story as a whole. Yakov suffers for his fellow Jews. He puts on the cloak of the suffering Jew. Malamud uses Yakov as a representative of the Jewish people’s historical role as scapegoats. Thus Yakov becomes the symbol and spokesman for suffering humanity. In the use of Job figure in The Fixer, we experience a heightening of experience. Both Yakov and Job feel that they are suffering unjustly and demand answers from God. The major difference between Job and Yakov is that Job never loses his faith in the existence and the power of God. He always clings to the goodness of the mighty and just
God as a child clings to his father. But Yakov often doubts God’s existence. Though he demands God’s apparition and favour from God, he never hears God speak to him and unlike God he has never seen any sign of God’s favour. But Malamud shows Jesus and Job figures in it to insist upon the universality of the pattern and for the development of the plot.

Job’s anguished cry is echoed in the short stories also. In reading Malamud’s stories one has the strange sensation of entering the Hebraic tradition of folk-wisdom. The subjects are the thorny ones of spiritual growth and decay. Here also as in the novels Malamud has mastered his craft with the aid of models of Hebraic tradition. In their pained but rarely bitter evocation of suffering and inhumanity, there is an echo of the traditional chant. The characters are caricatured into schlemiels for a heightening of experience thereby raising them into spiritual heights.

“The Angel Levine” is reminiscent of the Job story in several ways. Manischevitz’s anguish and tribulations remind one of the anguish and sufferings of Job. He contains the elements of caricature. He is a poor tailor as suffering servant who foreshadows both his suffering and his redemption. He is actually a reenactment of the archetypal Job in the role of suffering servant. The opening itself suggests Job:

Manischevitz, a tailor, in his fifty-first year suffered many reverses and indignities. Previously a man of comfortable means, he overnight lost all he had, when his establishment caught fire and, after a metal container of cleaning fluid exploded, burned to the ground .... At almost the same time, his son, of much promise, was killed in the war, and his daughter, without so much as a word of warning, married a lout and disappeared with him as off the face of the earth. Thereafter Manischvitz was
victimized by excruciating backaches and found himself unable to work even as a presser. (43)

The major difference from Job is that he has never been the affluent man that Job was supposed to be before disasters came on him. All other facts have parallels in the Job story. His store is burnt down overnight and his son is dead in the war. His daughter has eloped with a lout and has disappeared as off the face of the earth. His wife, hearing the news, comes close to death due to severe attacks. He himself suffers from backaches and cannot work. He is almost reduced to a pauper overnight. All these disasters come in “legions.” Like Job, he too finds his faith on trial. Malamud further carries the parallel to the extent that Manischevitz, like Job who heard God’s voice out of the whirlwind, also experiences the supernatural visitation by an angel. This so called angel is a Harlem Negro with the name of Alexander Levine. When Levine enters into the life of Manischevitz, he is on the verge of denying or even rebelling against God. Levine says that he has recently been disincarnated into an angel and has come to rescue Manischevitz from his sufferings. The test here is whether he is ready to believe. But Manischevitz is not in a mood to believe and he dismisses Levine as a fake. Before leaving, he tells the poor tailor that if he should change his mind, he can be found in Harlem.

When the intensity of his sufferings awakens him into an understanding of the truth, he goes in search of Levine and miraculously locates him in the Harlem which is a pretty large place to search for an “angel.” Manischevitz runs to him to find that he is dancing with a Negress. Still uncertain of his status, he returns home. When the doctor announces that Fanny, his wife cannot last more than another day or two, he is driven to an exquisite peak of suffering, and goes back to the angel once more. Now he braves the situation of the Harlem and humbles himself before Levine.
Tears blinded the tailor's eyes. Was ever man so tired? Should he say he believed a half-drunken Negro to be an angel? The silence slowly petrified .... He sighed. It moved but one had still to make a choice. "I think you are an angel from God." He said it in a broken voice, thinking, if you said it was said. If you believed it you must say it. If you believed, you believed. (55)

Here his redemption begins. He comes back to his flat to find Fanny miraculously healed. The angel Levine could be seen through a small window: "He heard an old noise, as though of a whirring of wings, and when he strained for a wider view, could have sworn he saw a dark figure borne aloft on a pair of magnificent black wings. A feather drifted down. Manischewitz gasped as it turned white, but it was only snowing" (56). Overcome with joy, he breaks out: "A wonderful thing, Fanny, believe me, there are Jews everywhere." Here in the story, like Job, he too moves through various levels of experiences. From being a comfortable middle class tailor, he has plunged to the depths of grief and suffering, so that allegorically he becomes the suffering servant embodied in the Job figure. He is reborn when he affirms his belief in Angel Levine as a genuine angel sent from God and even accepts him by humbling down before the angel. Thus as in Job's case, faith has triumphed over suffering and anguish to bring him redemption that comes of that heightened experience.

In other stories also we see the anguish and sufferings of Job. Kessler in "The Mourners," Mitka in "The girl of my Dreams," Feld in "The Seven Years," Mendel in "The Idiot's First" are all sufferers. In "Black is My Favourite Colour," Malamud shows the genuine love of Nat for Omita. Malamud very skillfully recounts the story of Nat Lime, a Jew, as he goes on offering charity to others excelling in the I-thou relationship like Job. In the end Nat has to be satisfied with his Jewish moral and social superiority. Remaining
in charity and love, he seeks to be the “brother’s keeper.” Here what happens is that Nat, is unable to understand the Negro’s emotional conflicts and Malamud shows his incapacity to learn from past experiences.

In "The First Seven Years" which echoes the Hebraic story of Jacob-Rachel, Feld, like Job, is gripped with sorrow for Miriam’s future. He afterwards gives consent for the relationship of Miriam with his assistant and the assistant agrees to return. Feld is required to acknowledge the divine essence in another, an act which redeems both the truster and the trustee. Malamud’s artistic touch transcends the distortion of caricature into higher perception. Through suffering, Feld learns compassion and pity for the needy and anguished and rises to higher values. Feld asks him to wait for two more years before the marriage, making the story parallel with Jacob’s story in the Bible. During this waiting period, the assistant undergoes Job-like suffering and enters into I-thou relationship with others. Thus Malamud raises the story into allegory. In the story Feld, Sobel and the poor accounting student Max are caricatured. Malamud with his characteristic compassionate voice charge the story with human mystery. The Jewish understanding of suffering in its various aspects thus forms the thematic and structural core of The Book of Job as well as good number of the fictional works of Bernard Malamud.