

# Genesis 38:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And she put her widow's garments off from her, and covered her with a vail, and wrapped herself, and sat in an open place, which is by the way to Timnath; for she saw that Shelah was grown, and she was not given unto him to wife.

## Analysis

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**And she put her widow's garments off from her, and covered her with a vail, and wrapped herself, and...** This passage is part of the Joseph narrative, a masterfully crafted account demonstrating God's sovereign providence working through human choices and circumstances to accomplish His redemptive purposes. The Joseph cycle shows how God transforms evil intentions into instruments of salvation.

Central themes include divine providence orchestrating events toward redemptive ends, the testing and refinement of character through suffering and success, forgiveness overcoming betrayal and injustice, and the preservation of God's covenant people through famine. Joseph's rise from slavery to second-in-command of Egypt illustrates how God exalts the humble and uses seeming disasters for ultimate good.

Theologically, these chapters reveal:

1. God's meticulous sovereignty over all events, even evil human actions
2. suffering as preparation for future service rather than punishment
3. forgiveness as reflecting divine character and enabling reconciliation
4. God's covenant faithfulness across generations ensuring the survival and blessing of His people

5. how present suffering gains meaning when viewed from the perspective of God's larger purposes.

Joseph's words "you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good" (50:20) epitomize biblical theodicy and providence.

## Historical Context

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The patriarchal narratives (Genesis 12-50) reflect the cultural, social, and legal customs of the ancient Near East during the Middle Bronze Age (2000-1500 BCE). Archaeological discoveries including the Mari tablets, Nuzi tablets, and Egyptian records confirm many details: nomadic pastoralism, covenant-making ceremonies, marriage customs, property laws, and international travel patterns described in Genesis.

The cultural practices reflected include: treaty/covenant forms (Genesis 15), bride-price customs (Genesis 24, 29), inheritance laws favoring firstborn sons (Genesis 25, 27), adoption practices (Genesis 15, 30), levirate-type arrangements (Genesis 38), and Egyptian administrative systems (Genesis 41, 47). These parallels confirm Genesis's historical reliability while showing how God worked within ancient cultural frameworks to accomplish His purposes.

For later Israelites, these narratives established their identity as Abraham's descendants, explained their claim to Canaan, justified their possession of Joseph's bones (Exodus 13:19), and provided models of faith despite imperfection. The patriarchs' failures and God's faithfulness encouraged Israel that covenant relationship depended on God's grace rather than human merit. The movement from Mesopotamia to Canaan to Egypt set the stage for the Exodus and conquest narratives.

## Related Passages

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**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

## Study Questions

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1. How does this verse deepen our understanding of God's character and His relationship with creation?
2. What specific changes in thinking or behavior does this verse call us to make?
3. How does understanding Christ as the ultimate fulfillment illuminate this passage's meaning?

## Interlinear Text

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וַיַּעֲלֵי יְהוָה אֶל-מִנוֹת הָבָדִיל וַיַּתְּסַרֵּךְ	from her and covered her
And she put garments her widow's	from her and covered her
H5493 H899 H491	H5921 H3680
בְּאַעֲוִים וַיַּתְּהִלֵּל וַיַּתְּחִלֵּת וַיַּתְּשִׁבֵּח בְּפִתְחָה וְעַל אַשְׁר עִינֵּים	an open place and sat in
with a vail and wrapped herself	an open place and sat in
H6809 H5968 H3427	H6607 H5869
שֶׁל הַגְּדָלָה בְּאַתָּה תִּמְנַחֵת וְכֵן כִּי	was grown that Shelah
which is by the way to Timnath	was grown that Shelah
H1870 H8553 H3588	H7200 H3588 H1431
לֹא וְנִתְּנַחַת לְאַשְׁהָה:	unto him to wife
and she was not given	unto him to wife
H1931 H3808 H5414	H0 H802

## Additional Cross-References

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**Genesis 38:26** (Parallel theme): And Judah acknowledged them, and said, She hath been more righteous than I; because that I gave her not to Shelah my son. And he knew her again no more.