

## By Chance or By Providence?

Ruth 2:1-7

Is your life ruled by chance or by God providence? How you answer this question influences everything.

**Chance** – “A purposeless, unpredictable and uncontrollable force making life favorable or unfavorable.”

Providence – *Pro* (before) and *videre* (to see). The word “provision” comes from the same Latin words.

**Providence** – “God’s control over events in life, working all things for the good of people” (Rom. 8:28).

We have seen in our study of Ruth how a Hebrew family moved to the land of Moab due to famine in Bethlehem. The two Hebrew sons married Moabite women (Ruth and Orpah), but then all the men in the Hebrew family died. Naomi (the Hebrew mom) and her daughter-in-law Ruth left Moab and came to Judah (Bethlehem). In the first chapter of Ruth, Naomi tries to convince Ruth to stay in Moab and remarry a Moabite since “I have no more sons” (Ruth 1:11). But Ruth commits to come to Bethlehem. After arriving, the two women find themselves in difficult straits. They need food, but they have no fields of their own. Upon arriving in Bethlehem, something amazing happens. Is it by chance or by providence? (Read text).

**NAS** - “*And she happened to come to the portion of the field belonging to Boaz.*” (Ruth 2:3).

**NIV** - “*As it turned out, she was working in a field belonging to Boaz.*”

**KJV** - “*her hap was to light on a part of the field* belonging unto Boaz: (2:3 KJV).

“Hap is the root word of happiness - “It is a striking fact that in every Indo-European language, without exception, going all the way back to ancient Greek, the word for happiness is a cognate with the word for luck. *Hap* is the Old Norse and Old English root of happiness, and it just means luck or chance. **“Happiness happens when happenstances happen to be happy.”**”

**ESV** – “*She happened to come to the field belonging to Boaz.*”

**JPS** – “*As luck would have it...*” (Jewish Publication Bible).

**Hebrew:** Ruth “*by chance she chanced upon*” ( וַיִּקַּר מִקְרָיָהּ ) (Phonetically: *va-yee-kayr meek-ray-ha*)

### I. Your understanding of this phrase determines your worldview.

In the ‘chance’ worldview there is no logical connection between events that are not in a direct cause-effect chain. No one influences the course of human events from above. Happenstance happens to us.

### II. The Bible reveals God as the Divine Cause of what seems to you like chance.

There are places in Scripture where the concept of chance and Providence go beautifully together.

**In Genesis 27**, Isaac, Abraham’s son, is an old man. He sends his son out to hunt game to make stew.

Jacob returns “quickly” with game, and Isaac asks him, “**How did you find it so quickly?**” (Gen. 27:20)

“Yahweh (the LORD), your Elhoim (your God), ***gave me success*** (Heb. “chance chanced to my face”).

**In Esther 4:14**, Mordecai asks Esther, the Hebrew wife of Persian King Xerxes, to help the Jews.

“For if you remain silent at this time, ***relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place***, but you and your father’s family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?” (4:14). *Provision is coming because Providence rules.*

Proverbs 16:10 - “A human heart makes the plans, but Yahweh gives the answer.” (NJB)

Proverbs 16:33 - “The dice are thrown...but their every decision is from the Lord.” (NET)

Proverbs 16:19 - “Better to be humble with the poor than to share booty with the proud.” (NJB)

### III. You often won’t see Providence in the middle of your affliction.

The mystery of unseen purpose is always with us. But when the storm clouds grow dark, and the ship seems ready to sink, remember that Providence is often only seen on the other side (see Job 42:12).