

# Ruth 2:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech.

## Analysis

**And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech.**

The narrative emphasizes Ruth's action: "she went, and came, and gleaned" (vatelekh vatavo vatelaqet, וַיֵּלֶךְ וַיָּבֹא וַיְלַקֵּט)—three verbs showing purposeful activity. Ruth doesn't delay or hesitate but immediately acts on her plan. Her following "after the reapers" (acharei haqotzrim, אַחֲרֵי הַקּוֹצְרִים) indicates she gleaned behind the harvesters, gathering what they dropped or left, as the law permitted.

The crucial phrase "her hap was to light on" (vayiqer miqrehah, וַיַּקְרֵר מִקְרָה) appears to describe mere chance or coincidence. The verb qarah (קָרָה) means "to meet by chance" or "happen upon," and miqreh (מִקְרָה) means "accident" or "chance occurrence." However, the narrative's irony is profound—what appears random is actually divine providence. Ruth "happens" to glean in the field of Boaz, precisely the kinsman-redeemer introduced in verse 1 who will ultimately redeem both Ruth and Naomi.

The narrator identifies Boaz as "of the kindred of Elimelech" (mimishpachat Elimelek, מִמִּשְׁפָּחַת אֶלְימֶלֶךְ), reminding readers of the kinsman-redeemer possibility. This seemingly chance encounter is sovereignly orchestrated. Proverbs 16:33

teaches: "The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD." What humans perceive as luck, chance, or coincidence, God ordains through His providence. This demonstrates Reformed theology's emphasis on God's meticulous sovereignty over all events, working through natural means to accomplish His purposes.

## Historical Context

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The concept of divine providence—God's sovereign governance of all events through natural means—is central to biblical theology and crucial for interpreting this verse. While ancient pagan cultures attributed events to fate, luck, or capricious deities, Scripture teaches that the one true God purposefully directs history and individual circumstances toward redemptive ends. The apparent "chance" of Ruth gleaning in Boaz's field reveals how God's invisible hand guides visible events.

Ancient agricultural practices involved teams of reapers cutting grain with sickles, while gleaners followed to gather dropped stalks and grain left at field edges. Landowners typically had multiple fields, and gleaners chose where to work based on reputation of the owner and likelihood of generous treatment. Ruth had no prior knowledge of Bethlehem's landowners or their character—her choice appeared random. Yet providence guided her to exactly the right field at exactly the right time to meet her kinsman-redeemer.

This verse illustrates a crucial theological principle: God's sovereignty doesn't eliminate human agency or natural causation. Ruth made genuine choices, exercised initiative, and bore responsibility for her actions. Yet God worked through her choices to accomplish His purposes. This differs from fatalism (which denies human freedom) and from deism (which denies divine involvement). Biblical providence affirms both God's comprehensive control and human moral responsibility—a mystery that Scripture presents without fully explaining.

## Related Passages

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**1 Corinthians 13:4** — Characteristics of love

**1 John 4:8** — God is love

**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

## Study Questions

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1. What apparently 'chance' circumstances in your life might actually be divine providence positioning you for God's purposes?
2. How does understanding God's sovereign providence over details change your perspective on daily decisions and seemingly random events?
3. In what ways does Ruth's combination of initiative (choosing to glean) and providence (guided to Boaz's field) model the relationship between human action and divine sovereignty?

## Interlinear Text

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וַיָּבֹא פְּקָדָר יְמֵינָם אַחֲרֵי הַשְׂדָה וַיַּלְקֹט תְּבוֹאָה וַיַּתְּלֹךְ לְגַדְעָן  
H1980 and came H935 and gleaned H3950 in the field H7704 after H310 the reapers H7114 was to light H7136

אֲשֶׁר לְבָעֵז הַשְׂדָה סְלִקְתָּ מִקְרָב  
and her hap on a part in the field belonging unto Boaz H834  
H4745 H2513 H7704 H1162

אֶלְימֶלֶךְ מִמֶּשֶׁפֶת  
who was of the kindred of Elimelech  
H4940 H458

## Additional Cross-References

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**Matthew 10:29** (Parallel theme): Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.

**Luke 10:31** (Parallel theme): And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

**2 Thessalonians 3:12** (Parallel theme): Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.

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