

No Such thing as a coincidence
a meditation based on
Ruth 2

Some people call it “luck.” “Well,” they say. “Isn't that lucky?” Others call it, “A coincidence.” The American Heritage dictionary defines the word as an “accidental” series of events that “seems to have been planned.” In the story we just read, we are right off introduced to Boaz, relative of Naomi's husband. We might think, “Well, Naomi must have remembered about this man, and so told Ruth to go look for him.” That's not how it went, however. In fact, Naomi doesn't know at all where Ruth went. When Ruth reveals the name of the man, Naomi's reaction is that of surprise. “*The LORD bless him!*” Naomi said to her daughter-in-law. “*He has not stopped showing kindness to the living and the dead.*” She added, “*That man is our close relative; he is one of our kinsman-redeemers*” (Ruth 1:20).

Well, isn't that a coincidence! Isn't it just an accident that Ruth “just happened” to find herself working *in a field belonging to Boaz* (vs 3)? It almost seems to have been planned that way! Planned -- by whom?

The story could be read as a coincidence, a chance occurrence. In that case, there was not just one coincidence that took place in this story. There was two, at least. More than one. Did you catch the other one? It comes in the first conversation between Ruth and Boaz. Boaz offers, out of his worthy character, not just provision – food needed not just for today, but into tomorrow too, and the next; Boaz offers not just guidance -- “*Don't glean in another field and don't go away from here*” (vs 8); Boaz offers protection for Ruth -- “*I have told the men not to touch you*” (vs 9); something a woman, alone, and in a very vulnerable position, was desperately in need of! So here comes the coincidence. Ruth asks, “*Why have I found such favor in your eyes that you notice me - a foreigner?*” (Ruth 1:10).

When Ruth returns to Naomi – who is too old and weak to be of any use for field work, and has presumably spent the day alone – what does Naomi say? “*Where did you glean today? Where did you work? Blessed is the man who took notice of you*” (Ruth 1:19). How can it be that almost exactly the same words are found on the lips of Ruth, and are spoken without Naomi knowing what has happened on the field, almost exactly the same word?

Has God ever done the same for us? Has he ever brought us together with someone we know, in a completely accidental way, and showed his – that is, God's – kindness to us through the conversation we had with the other person or people? Notice again what Naomi says to Ruth on her return to her. “*He has not stopped showing*

kindness to the living and the dead.” She speaks of God there. His action toward us. Undeserved.

Have we ever been in the position of Boaz: someone is in desperate need, and we not only pass the kindness on we have received from God; we not only provide for the other; not only give guidance to the other; but also protect the other! Notice that this is the protection God himself offers to his people. Boaz portrays this protection. “*May you be richly rewarded by the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge*” (Ruth 1:12). It is not protection, as we know from the story, from every disaster that may come our way. It is not protection from every crisis we might face. Yet it is God's kindness shown-up in real time, payed forward from one individual to another, from one people to another.