Chayei Sarah

One Of The Most Dramatic Moments In The Torah

In Parshat Chayei Sarah, Rivka, having been identified as the chosen bride for Yitzchak, arrives in the land of Canaan. She sees him for the first time, and then:

"וַתִּפֹּל מֵעַל הַגָּמָל"
"She fell off her camel."

How did that happen? Rashi explains that "וַתִּפֹּל" doesn't mean "she fell off", as the English translation would suggest, but rather that she turned her face to the ground. She was overawed by the majestic sight of Yitzchak in front of her.

And indeed the Ramban agrees: Rivka didn't fall to the ground, but in a very modest way, she showed respect to the man that she was going to marry. Immediately after, the Ramban points out, she covered her hair with a veil. That was the appropriate way to present herself.

Alternatively, it is explained in the Midrash Bereishit Rabah, that at that moment, Yitzchak was davening. He had gone out:

"לָשׂוּחַ בַּשָּׂדֶה"
"to meditate in the field",

"Meditate" here means prayer. And that was an exceptionally holy sight for Rivka to see. She was overawed, lost her balance, and she fell to the ground.

However, the Netziv, in his perush "Haamek Davar", says that Rivka *did* fall to the ground. And the reason is that she was frightened. She had never seen such a sight before. She immediately recognised the huge gap between the holiness and stature of Yitzhak in front of her, and compared it to her background. And the Netziv goes on to explain how, psychologically, Rivka never recovered from that moment, because she was always, in her own perception, behind Yitzchak - as a result of which they didn't communicate sufficiently as husband and wife. So when it came to the key moment of the blessings, they weren't acting together.

But I must add a fifth explanation. And that is: she fell for him. This was a journey of love. Yes, they had never met before, but all the descriptions that she had heard about Yitzchak made it clear to her he was the one that Hashem was going to bless her with, so that she could live a marvellous, happy, joyous and meaningful rest of her life. As soon as she saw him, she fell for him.

As a result, that English term, to "fall for" somebody, indeed originates from this passage in the Torah.

Shabbat Shalom.