The bridal gown

The Talmud describes how two thousand years ago brides were made up and perfumed as to enhance their beauty. The Midrash speaks of twenty-four different adornments with which the bride was beautified. These are the twenty-four bridal adornments mentioned in Isaiah (3:18-24). Everything was done to make the bride look as lovely as possible.

There are no special requirements as to the the style of the wedding gown, except modesty. Today the custom is that the color of the wedding gown is white, which represents purity. Although in some Chasidic circles the brides would marry in light pastel shades.

What should a bride do with her gown after the wedding?

Some brides rent a gown and others, who can afford it, buy the dress. In this last case it is a very fine custom to make the gown available to brides who cannot afford it. In many communities there is a registry of such bridal gowns, along with their sizes, so that girls who wish to borrow a gown will have ready access to those available.

In our community and in many other communities many brides choose to donate their gowns to institutions in Israel who make them available to poor brides there. Doing this, is a holy deed on the part of the bride. When such plans are made before the wedding, the merit of this action enhances the merit of the wedding itself.

This form of Tzedaqa, considered a category by itself, is known as *hakhnasat kalla*: helping a needy bride to get married. It is a very special merit for individuals and for a community to assist a bride (or a groom) with insufficient means, to get married. According to the shulchan ‘arukh (yore de’a 249:15) *hakhnasat kalla*, takes precedence over all other types of Tzedaqa.