

A LOOK INTO LAKEWOOD

A CHAT WITH MOSHE SHINDLER OF MINT MEDIA LLC



L'ABEL SCHWARTZ PHOTOGRAPHY

If a picture is worth a thousand words, how many is a video worth?

When it comes to Moshe Shindler of Mint Media LLC's wide variety of masterfully produced cinematic experiences, words often fail to fully capture their essence. Heartfelt interviews, pensive faces and spine-tingling action are just some of the components that are typical of Shindler's videos – all set to a mood-inducing soundtrack, of course.

For Shindler, the work is hard, yet exhilarating, and he finds that more often than not, he's pulled along on the journey just as much as his captive audience. This week, we went backstage to learn how Mint Media's videos, and Mint Media's producer himself, got off the ground.

Yated: *Producing videos has an exciting sound to it, but it isn't a field usually considered in the frum world. How did you get your start?*

Moshe Shindler: As a kid, I always enjoyed making slideshows and PowerPoint presentations for my family, for small events like a *sheva brachos* or an anniversary. As a *bochur*, I went on a road trip with friends and put together a video of the whole experience afterwards. I often did these types of small projects, but nothing that ever went past a couple of friends.

Then, about four years ago, I was in *kollel* and had no vision, as of yet, as to how I would make a *parnassah*. I received a phone call from my brother that his boss was being honored at a major dinner. Could I make a video of him and a few co-workers speaking about their boss? It turns out that my brother was asked to speak, but didn't really relish the idea of getting up in front of 500 to 600 people, so he asked permission to present a video instead.

I had exactly six days to put it together with zero professional experience and no camcorder, let alone any other equipment. But I enjoyed the challenge, so I jumped right in.

I worked on the project feverishly, borrowing a camcorder, tracking down interview subjects to feature, even attempting to purchase professional software, but quickly realizing that six days didn't give me enough time to learn how to use it! Sunday afternoon, at about 1:00, with the dinner called for 6:00, I dropped off the full



video and asked the dinner coordinators to test it out. It worked perfectly and I left for second *seuder*.

Fast forward a few hours later. A million missed calls and a frantic phone call revealed that the video wasn't working. Last minute, the coordinators decided to play the video on a DVD player instead of the laptop they had said they were using, and it wasn't formatted for that. I ran to the event, where I spent a few mortifying hours while they failed to get my first-ever video to play. A number of friends at the dinner asked what I was doing there, knowing that I was learning in *kollel*. I had to answer each one that I made the video – which, of course, wasn't working.

It was just about the worst night of my life.

Y: *What a start! So how did you recover?*

MS: On the way to my car – literally before I even left the event – I got a phone call from a friend who said, "Great news! Lakewood Chaveirim wants you to make their video!"

I told him, "No way." I saw no reason to humiliate myself like that again!

But they were persistent, I took the job, and I really enjoyed it. We produced ten and a half thousand copies of that first Chaveirim video, which went out all over Lakewood, and the job led to phone calls with requests for more videos.

Eventually, I made it official: I opened an office, created a name and business cards, and put my all into developing my hobby into a *parnassah*.

Y: *What was one of the most memorable videos you have made?*

MS: I produced a video for an organization called "Bread for Israel," a *tzedakah* that distributes loaves of bread to the poor of Eretz Yisroel. It was founded by a young businessman from Queens who realized that the difference between people going to sleep hungry or satisfied is often as small as a slice of bread. He negotiated a deal with local bakeries to buy every loaf for his *tzedakah* for \$1 (the typical price is about \$3), and all expenses are covered by private donors, so every dollar goes straight to a loaf.

We created a video that depicts the sto-

ries of a few hungry children – using actors, so as not to embarrass the true recipients – by showcasing different situations throughout their days, all ending at the Bread for Israel distribution site. The video has no talking or words at all. It plays on the emotions, and it was a fascinating job.

For another job, Mir Yerushalayim is approaching the anniversary of the 200th year since their founding and I just did a video for their dinner. Obviously, we couldn't find anyone from 200 years ago, but I was able to find someone in Lakewood who is 102, *ka"h*, and learned in Mir, Poland, and I interviewed him for the video. We grabbed the opportunity to see what he could remember.

Another interviewee for that same video was a 97-year-old who learned by the *Chofetz Chaim*. He looks at least 20 years younger than he is, and his memory was amazing; he is a living piece of history. He related how he learned by Rav Boruch Ber Leibowitz *zt"l* and a number of his contemporaries became *gedolim*. It was mesmerizing to be able to listen to him.

Y: Do you find that you're often drawn in to your subjects' stories?

MS: Yes, definitely. On the whole, I typically become emotionally attached. I do the majority of my work - about 70 percent - for non-profit organizations, and when I see how passionate they are about their cause, I get attached, too. And the truth is, the real connection to my project is what I need to be able to make a good video.

Y: What are some of the more unusual things you had to do to get a great video?

MS: There was an honoree of a *yeshiva* dinner who needed to be interviewed and I flew with my cameraman out of town just to film him. Sadly, this man's relative was sick, and on the day that we came, he couldn't get out of the hospital. So we filmed him in the lobby.

We were granted 15 minutes, and as it was a busy time of the evening, we had to keep stopping the camera as people walked behind the subject. The *yeshiva* would not

have been too happy to have hospital personnel and visitors in the background of their video!

For another interview, I flew to Phoenix to film an interviewee who gave a 5 a.m. *Daf Yomi shiur* and the client wanted footage of the actual *shiur*. I had to get up in the middle of the night to film the *shiur*, and only two people showed up that day. For that crowd, we could have let him give a staged *shiur* any other time of the day!

Y: Producing videos used to be your hobby; now it's your career. Sometimes, this can take away the excitement, but you seem to still really enjoy what you do. What's your favorite part of the job?

MS: Do I have to choose one thing?

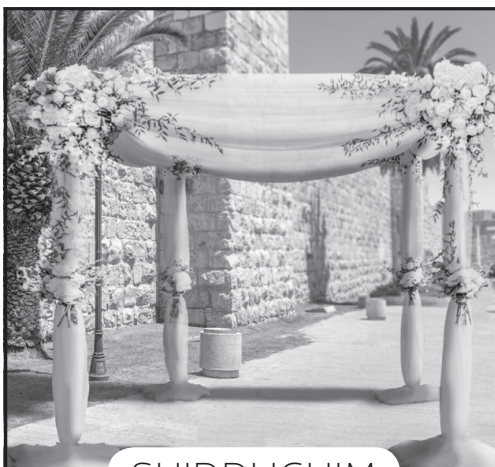
Number one is the fact that I get to meet new people all the time, which I really enjoy, and I'm fortunate to meet a lot of very interesting people. I remain in contact with many, many of them and I've gained a tremendous number of friends. Especially the clients themselves, we work together for about a month or longer, so we become close, and whenever I make a *simcha*, those are the people who come.

The second thing, specific to servicing non-profits, is that it's nice to have a job where I'm helping *tzedakah* organizations and *yeshivos*. The videos are an important piece of their fundraising, and it's a gratifying thought that I'm able to support my family and help many organizations at the same time.

I've also gotten to interview a number of *roshei yeshiva* and *gedolim*, which is very special.

When I started, I never envisioned this field as a *parnassah*, but now, I can't imagine doing anything else. I've learned that even if you hit failures along the way, you never know what could come out of it if you just plug along. You could fall apart from a failure or you could use it as an opportunity to be the beginning of something great.

To reach Mint Media, contact Mr. Shindler at 732.813.4222.




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After trying many *segulos*, I decided to try the Better Than A Segulah program, as a *zechus* for a *zivug*, and (as a single parent trying to make ends meet) for *parnassah*.

In the middle of the second set of 40 days, *parnassah* started improving, and *shidduchim* started to be suggested.

During the third set of 40 days, I found my *zivug*! I'm still continuing for 40 days until my *chasunah*, IY"H. 

– B.R.
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SEPARATE SEATING

Dr. Steven Frucht, Professor of Neurology, is the director of Movement Disorders at the Bendheim Parkinson and Movement Disorder Center of Mount Sinai Medical Center, where he is committed to insuring that every patient seen receives top-notch, compassionate care. He has been widely published in medical papers, has authored two textbooks, and lectures extensively both nationally and internationally.

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