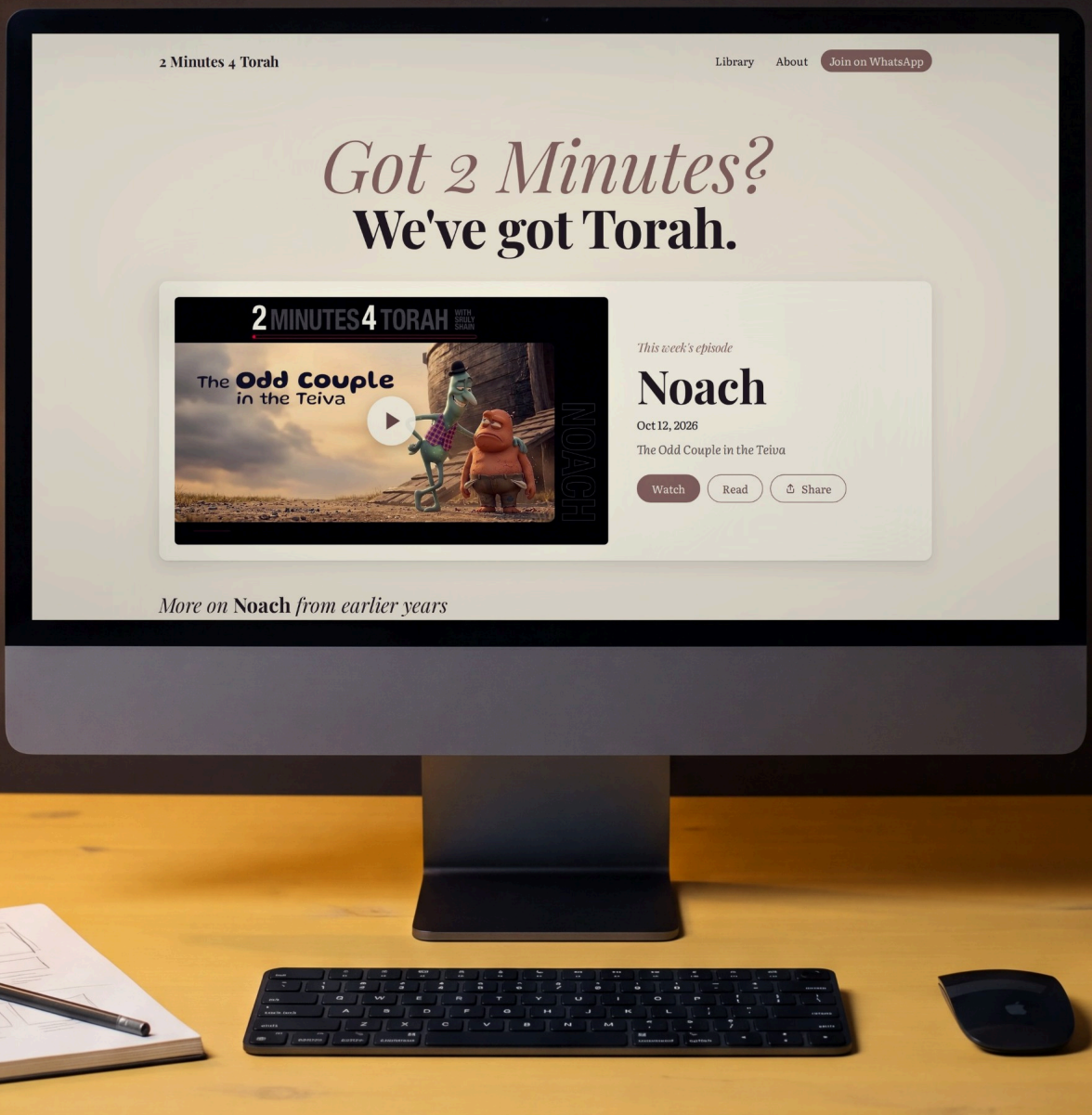
THE CUTTING CORNER

SECOND EDITION

From Sketch to Site.

How I built 2m4t.org with Claude: a searchable home for every episode of 2 Minutes 4 Torah.



A REAL PROJECT, START TO FINISH

AVRAHAM KOHN

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The spark

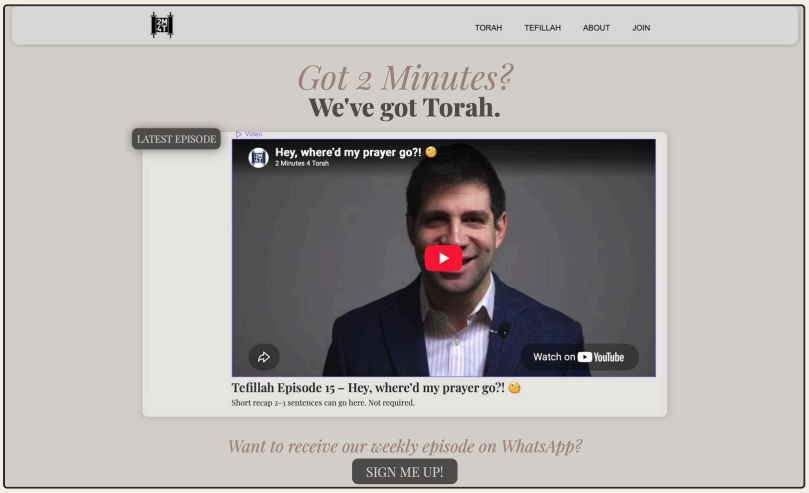
2 Minutes 4 Torah is a weekly two-minute Dvar Torah by Sruly Shain. I've edited it for years: more than 260 Torah episodes over the seasons, plus 2 Minutes 4 Tefillah and a handful of specials.

The connection came through Laibel. He knew Sruly long before I did, introduced us, and offered my editing to Sruly on his own watch, as his contribution to the project. Laibel opened the door. Since then, every edit has been mine, and I've given each one everything I have.

In 2022 I wanted to give it a home. Not a YouTube channel (Sruly already has one), but something more robust and easier to find your way around: a real library, every episode, organized by parsha, with the latest one up top. I opened a Webflow account and designed the look and feel. "Got 2 Minutes? We've got Torah." A featured latest episode. A WhatsApp sign-up button.

Then I tried to build it with the CMS, the collections, the bindings, and I was way over my head. I bought the domains. I put in many hours. I could not get it moving.

The design wasn't the problem. I knew exactly what it should look and feel like. What I couldn't do was the engineering underneath it.



My original 2022 design in Webflow. This screenshot is what I gave Claude to show the look and feel I wanted. The headline, the featured episode and the WhatsApp sign-up all made it into the final site.

Four years later, AI had caught up. The whole site, including transcripts for nearly every episode and a lot of technical work behind the scenes, took about 8 hours of my time: about half an hour writing out the plan a couple of weeks before, some brainstorming along the way, 4 hours 40 minutes on Motzei Shabbos, about 2 hours on Sunday, and about another half hour testing the first real launch: uploading the first new episode the normal way, with every step of the workflow in place, catching a couple of bugs and ironing them out. That doesn't count the hours Claude kept working overnight while I slept, reading the captions of every episode and turning them into transcripts. The design was the easy part, because it was already a vision I had. It was a matter of describing it, iterating and perfecting it, using Claude as my tool.

Two weeks after launch, the site grew a backend of its own: a studio where Sruly and I upload, schedule and manage every video without ever opening Vimeo, plus a daily 30-second video series, a mailbox and built-in analytics. That's part two of this guide, starting at chapter 10.

THE GAME PLAN

Plan before you build

This is the most important chapter in the guide.

The temptation with AI is to open a chat and say "build me a website." You'll get a website. It won't be yours, and it won't solve the problems you didn't know you had.

So before a single line of code, I spelled out the whole vision and asked for a plan. My exact words were: "Don't start working on anything yet. Just build this out as a plan."

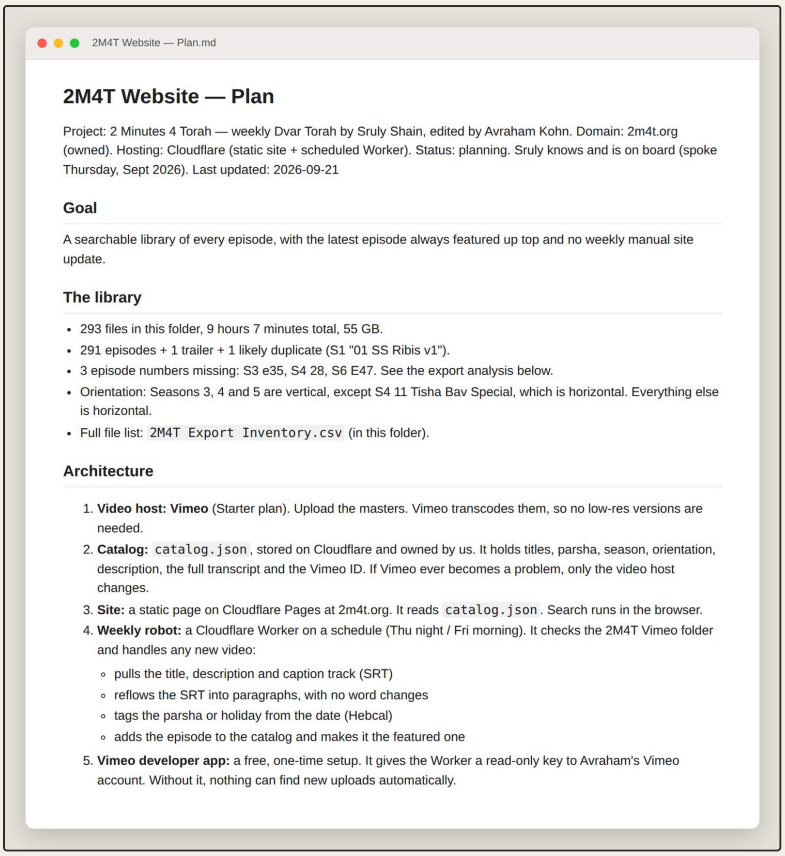
What I described

- A searchable catalog of every episode, like sites I'd built before, with a lightbox that shows the video, the title and the full Dvar Torah.
- The latest episode always featured at the top, with past episodes on the same parsha underneath.
- A site that updates itself. I upload to a Vimeo folder; the site picks it up. No weekly website chores.
- My 2022 design. I gave Claude a screenshot of the original Webflow page to show the basic look and feel I wanted: the headline, the cream tones, the serif type, the featured episode up top.
- Its own identity, separate from any other brand I work on.
- What I'm not in charge of (Sruly's YouTube channel) and how my files actually live (exports on Drive, dumped into Vimeo in batches).

What the plan contained

The plan became a document in the project folder, the game plan I kept coming back to:

- **The goal in one sentence:** a searchable library of every episode, with the latest always featured and no weekly manual update.
- **An inventory of the library:** 293 files, 9 hours 7 minutes, 55 GB. Which seasons are vertical and which are horizontal.
- **The architecture:** Vimeo hosts the videos, Cloudflare hosts the site, and a small scheduled program connects them.
- **Hosting alternatives, weighed and decided:** Cloudflare Stream, Bunny, YouTube, self-hosting. Decision: Vimeo, because I already use it and it can double as the "admin panel."
- **The weekly routine after launch:** upload the video, give it a title in the format I designed, and paste the transcript into the description. The rest happens automatically. (More on that in chapter 5.)
- **The site structure:** hero, featured episode, "from previous years," library with search and filters, the episode window, About, Join.
- **Design direction:** cream and warm stone, a dusty mauve accent, a soft italic serif for script lines and a strong serif for headlines. Keep the softness of my 2022 sketch, drop the muddy gray boxes.
- **Phases:** clean up the exports, upload, mock up, connect, test with one real weekly upload, launch.
- **Open questions:** things only I could answer.



2M4T Website — Plan.md

2M4T Website — Plan

Project: 2 Minutes 4 Torah — weekly Dvar Torah by Sruly Shain, edited by Avraham Kohn. Domain: 2m4t.org (owned). Hosting: Cloudflare (static site + scheduled Worker). Status: planning. Sruly knows and is on board (spoke Thursday, Sept 2026). Last updated: 2026-09-21

Goal

A searchable library of every episode, with the latest episode always featured up top and no weekly manual site update.

The library

- 293 files in this folder, 9 hours 7 minutes total, 55 GB.
- 291 episodes + 1 trailer + 1 likely duplicate (S1 "01 SS Ribis v1").
- 3 episode numbers missing: S3 e35, S4 28, S6 E47. See the export analysis below.
- Orientation: Seasons 3, 4 and 5 are vertical, except S4 11 Tisha Bav Special, which is horizontal. Everything else is horizontal.
- Full file list: `2M4T Export Inventory.csv` (in this folder).

Architecture

1. **Video host: Vimeo** (Starter plan). Upload the masters. Vimeo transcodes them, so no low-res versions are needed.
2. **Catalog:** `catalog.json`, stored on Cloudflare and owned by us. It holds titles, parsha, season, orientation, description, the full transcript and the Vimeo ID. If Vimeo ever becomes a problem, only the video host changes.
3. **Site:** a static page on Cloudflare Pages at 2m4t.org. It reads `catalog.json`. Search runs in the browser.
4. **Weekly robot:** a Cloudflare Worker on a schedule (Thu night / Fri morning). It checks the 2M4T Vimeo folder and handles any new video:
   - pulls the title, description and caption track (SRT)
   - reflows the SRT into paragraphs, with no word changes
   - tags the parsha or holiday from the date (Hebcal)
   - adds the episode to the catalog and makes it the featured one
5. **Vimeo developer app:** a free, one-time setup. It gives the Worker a read-only key to Avraham's Vimeo account. Without it, nothing can find new uploads automatically.

The game plan, written before anything was built.

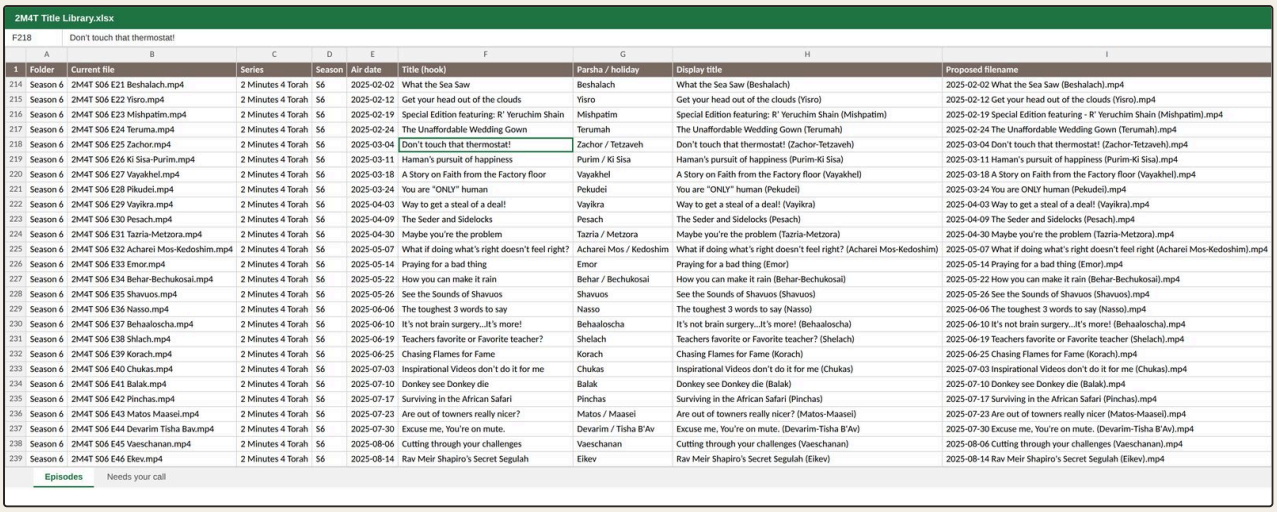
What planning caught before it could cost me

The planning pass analyzed every export and flagged problems I would have hit halfway through the build:

- Three episodes missing from the folders (a Tetzaveh, a Vayechi and a Re'eh). I pulled them from YouTube and from Sruly.
- A duplicate of the very first episode under a different name.
- A batch of Season 4 files that looked like low-resolution WhatsApp versions.
- Spellings that drifted over the years (Nitzvavim, Vaeyra, Shvuos, Naso and Nasso).
- A Vimeo plan question: older accounts are capped at 60 videos. Worth checking before uploading 290.
- Two early episodes with no parsha in the name. Their dates pointed to Nasso and Behaaloscha.

The plan was a living document

The plan changed as I learned. Originally I was going to rename every file. Later I decided: don't rename anything. The titles come from a separate Title Library instead. The plan got an update section each time something like that changed, so I always knew which decision was current.



2M4T Title Library.xlsx

F218 Don't touch that thermostat!

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1	Folder	Current file	Series	Season	Air date	Title (hook)	Parsha / holiday	Display title	Proposed filename
214	Season 6	2M4T S06 E21 Beshalach.mp4	2 Minutes 4 Torah	S6	2025-02-02	What the Sea Saw	Beshalach	What the Sea Saw (Beshalach)	2025-02-02 What the Sea Saw (Beshalach).mp4
215	Season 6	2M4T S06 E22 Yisro.mp4	2 Minutes 4 Torah	S6	2025-02-12	Get your head out of the clouds	Yisro	Get your head out of the clouds (Yisro)	2025-02-12 Get your head out of the clouds (Yisro).mp4
216	Season 6	2M4T S06 E23 Mishpatim.mp4	2 Minutes 4 Torah	S6	2025-02-19	Special Edition featuring: R' Yeruchim Shain	Mishpatim	Special Edition featuring: R' Yeruchim Shain (Mishpatim)	2025-02-19 Special Edition featuring - R' Yeruchim Shain (Mishpatim).mp4
217	Season 6	2M4T S06 E24 Teruma.mp4	2 Minutes 4 Torah	S6	2025-02-24	The Unaffordable Wedding Gown	Terumah	The Unaffordable Wedding Gown (Terumah)	2025-02-24 The Unaffordable Wedding Gown (Terumah).mp4
218	Season 6	2M4T S06 E25 Zachor.mp4	2 Minutes 4 Torah	S6	2025-03-04	Don't touch that thermostat!	Zachor / Tetzaveh	Don't touch that thermostat! (Zachor-Tetzaveh)	2025-03-04 Don't touch that thermostat! (Zachor-Tetzaveh).mp4
219	Season 6	2M4T S06 E26 Ki Sisa-Purim.mp4	2 Minutes 4 Torah	S6	2025-03-11	Haman's pursuit of happiness	Purim / Ki Sisa	Haman's pursuit of happiness (Purim-Ki Sisa)	2025-03-11 Haman's pursuit of happiness (Purim-Ki Sisa).mp4
220	Season 6	2M4T S06 E27 Vayakhel.mp4	2 Minutes 4 Torah	S6	2025-03-18	A Story on Faith from the Factory floor	Vayakhel	A Story on Faith from the Factory floor (Vayakhel)	2025-03-18 A Story on Faith from the Factory floor (Vayakhel).mp4
221	Season 6	2M4T S06 E28 Pikudei.mp4	2 Minutes 4 Torah	S6	2025-03-24	You are "ONLY" human	Pekudei	You are "ONLY" human (Pekudei)	2025-03-24 You are ONLY human (Pekudei).mp4
222	Season 6	2M4T S06 E29 Vayikra.mp4	2 Minutes 4 Torah	S6	2025-04-03	Way to get a steal of a deal!	Vayikra	Way to get a steal of a deal! (Vayikra)	2025-04-03 Way to get a steal of a deal! (Vayikra).mp4
223	Season 6	2M4T S06 E30 Pesach.mp4	2 Minutes 4 Torah	S6	2025-04-09	The Seder and Sidelocks	Pesach	The Seder and Sidelocks (Pesach)	2025-04-09 The Seder and Sidelocks (Pesach).mp4
224	Season 6	2M4T S06 E31 Tazria-Metzora.mp4	2 Minutes 4 Torah	S6	2025-04-30	Maybe you're the problem	Tazria / Metzora	Maybe you're the problem (Tazria-Metzora)	2025-04-30 Maybe you're the problem (Tazria-Metzora).mp4
225	Season 6	2M4T S06 E32 Acharei Mos-Kedoshim.mp4	2 Minutes 4 Torah	S6	2025-05-07	What if doing what's right doesn't feel right?	Acharei Mos / Kedoshim	What if doing what's right doesn't feel right? (Acharei Mos-Kedoshim)	2025-05-07 What if doing what's right doesn't feel right (Acharei Mos-Kedoshim).mp4
226	Season 6	2M4T S06 E33 Emor.mp4	2 Minutes 4 Torah	S6	2025-05-14	Praying for a bad thing	Emor	Praying for a bad thing (Emor)	2025-05-14 Praying for a bad thing (Emor).mp4
227	Season 6	2M4T S06 E34 Behar-Bechukosai.mp4	2 Minutes 4 Torah	S6	2025-05-22	How you can make it rain	Behar / Bechukosai	How you can make it rain (Behar-Bechukosai)	2025-05-22 How you can make it rain (Behar-Bechukosai).mp4
228	Season 6	2M4T S06 E35 Shavuos.mp4	2 Minutes 4 Torah	S6	2025-05-26	See the Sounds of Shavuos	Shavuos	See the Sounds of Shavuos (Shavuos)	2025-05-26 See the Sounds of Shavuos (Shavuos).mp4
229	Season 6	2M4T S06 E36 Nasso.mp4	2 Minutes 4 Torah	S6	2025-06-06	The toughest 3 words to say	Nasso	The toughest 3 words to say (Nasso)	2025-06-06 The toughest 3 words to say (Nasso).mp4
230	Season 6	2M4T S06 E37 Behaaloscha.mp4	2 Minutes 4 Torah	S6	2025-06-10	It's not brain surgery...It's more!	Behaaloscha	It's not brain surgery...It's more! (Behaaloscha)	2025-06-10 It's not brain surgery...It's more! (Behaaloscha).mp4
231	Season 6	2M4T S06 E38 Shlach.mp4	2 Minutes 4 Torah	S6	2025-06-19	Teachers favorite or Favorite teacher?	Shelach	Teachers favorite or Favorite teacher? (Shelach)	2025-06-19 Teachers favorite or Favorite teacher (Shelach).mp4
232	Season 6	2M4T S06 E39 Korach.mp4	2 Minutes 4 Torah	S6	2025-06-25	Chasing Flames for Fame	Korach	Chasing Flames for Fame (Korach)	2025-06-25 Chasing Flames for Fame (Korach).mp4
233	Season 6	2M4T S06 E40 Chukas.mp4	2 Minutes 4 Torah	S6	2025-07-03	Inspirational Videos don't do it for me	Chukas	Inspirational Videos don't do it for me (Chukas)	2025-07-03 Inspirational Videos don't do it for me (Chukas).mp4
234	Season 6	2M4T S06 E41 Balak.mp4	2 Minutes 4 Torah	S6	2025-07-10	Donkey see Donkey die	Balak	Donkey see Donkey die (Balak)	2025-07-10 Donkey see Donkey die (Balak).mp4
235	Season 6	2M4T S06 E42 Pinchas.mp4	2 Minutes 4 Torah	S6	2025-07-17	Surviving in the African Safari	Pinchas	Surviving in the African Safari (Pinchas)	2025-07-17 Surviving in the African Safari (Pinchas).mp4
236	Season 6	2M4T S06 E43 Matos Maasei.mp4	2 Minutes 4 Torah	S6	2025-07-23	Are out of towners really nicer?	Matos / Maasei	Are out of towners really nicer? (Matos-Maasei)	2025-07-23 Are out of towners really nicer (Matos-Maasei).mp4
237	Season 6	2M4T S06 E44 Devarim Tisha Bav.mp4	2 Minutes 4 Torah	S6	2025-07-30	Excuse me, You're on mute.	Devarim / Tisha B'Av	Excuse me, You're on mute. (Devarim-Tisha B'Av)	2025-07-30 Excuse me, You're on mute. (Devarim-Tisha B'Av).mp4
238	Season 6	2M4T S06 E45 Vaeschanan.mp4	2 Minutes 4 Torah	S6	2025-08-06	Cutting through your challenges	Vaeschanan	Cutting through your challenges (Vaeschanan)	2025-08-06 Cutting through your challenges (Vaeschanan).mp4
239	Season 6	2M4T S06 E46 Ekev.mp4	2 Minutes 4 Torah	S6	2025-08-14	Rav Meir Shapiro's Secret Segulah	Eikev	Rav Meir Shapiro's Secret Segulah (Eikev)	2025-08-14 Rav Meir Shapiro's Secret Segulah (Eikev).mp4

Episodes | Needs your call

The Title Library, built during planning: every file matched to Sruly's original YouTube title, air date and parsha. An early stage of the project, before any site existed.

Why this matters

- A plan turns a vision into decisions. "I want a nice site" can't be built. "Vimeo is the CMS, the parsha comes from the title, the week moves on Sunday morning" can.
- A plan surfaces the questions only you can answer, before they become rework.
- A plan gives the AI the same picture you have in your head. Every later request ("make the parsha bigger," "add a share button") landed in the right place because the whole structure was already agreed.
- Changes are cleanest in the plan. Claude will rewrite code whenever I ask, but late in a build one change ripples through everything built on top of it. In the plan, it's one line.

THE LESSON

Spend the first hour on the plan, not the build. Describe the vision, the routine you want afterward, and what you don't control. Ask for a plan, read it, answer its questions, and only then say go.

THE ARCHIVE

Getting the library in order

Before there could be a site, there had to be a clean library.

The Title Library

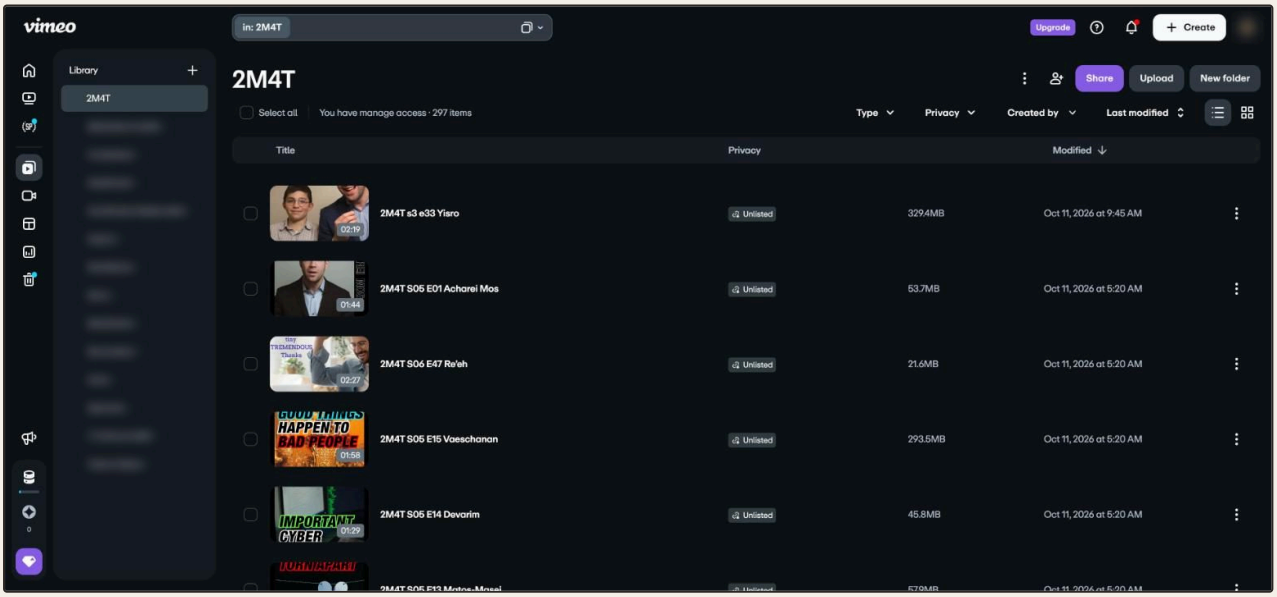
Sruly's YouTube channel had the real titles and air dates, like "Hey, how's it going? (Yisro)." My export files had names like "2M4T S06 E69 Yisro." I pulled all 339 YouTube uploads with their exact dates and matched them to my files by runtime and date. 290 of 296 files matched automatically; the rest were resolved by hand. The result is one spreadsheet, the Title Library, that holds every title, date and parsha. Everything on the site comes from it.

Thumbnails

One rule: the thumbnail is always the first frame of the video, the title card. Every one of the 289 episodes follows it, and every new upload will too.

Vimeo

Every episode went into one Vimeo folder, unlisted, with my 2M4T player preset: no title, no byline, no portrait, and a highlight color that matches the site. Once the first design was built, I asked Claude for the brand colors, took the warm mauve-brown and set it as the player's color, so the play button and progress bar look like part of the page. Vimeo's automatic captions were removed, duplicates deleted, first-frame thumbnails set. I held back the last eight episodes of Season 6 on purpose, so the auto-update could be tested for real later.



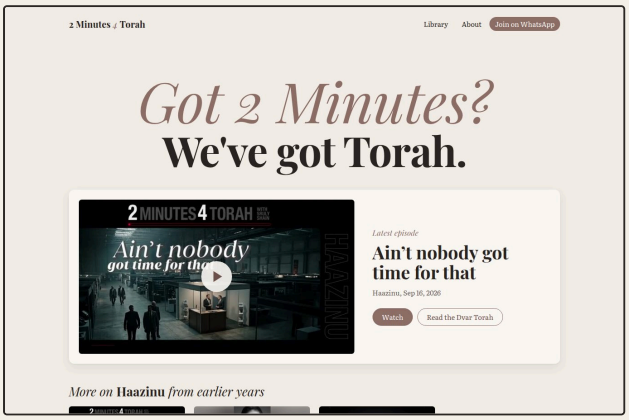
The whole archive in one Vimeo folder, 297 items, all unlisted. At launch, this folder was the site's only "admin panel." Today the studio does that job (chapter 10). (Other folders and account details blurred.)

BUILD NIGHT

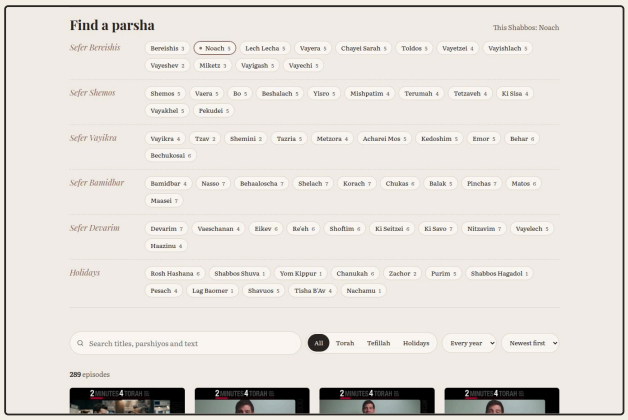
Build night: from vision to first draft

The first full draft was built in one evening, Motzei Shabbos, October 10.

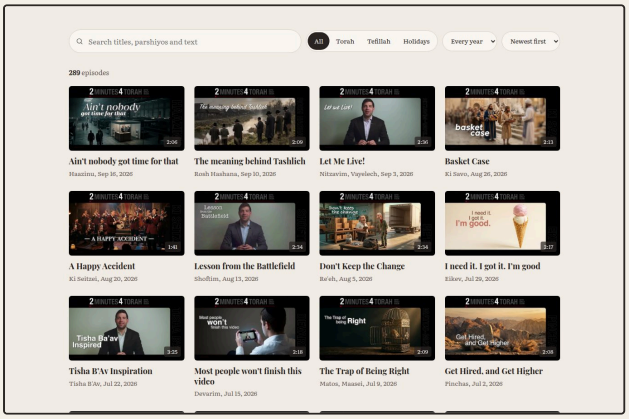
Because the vision was already clear, and Claude had my 2022 screenshot to work from, the first draft looked like my sketch from day one: the cream page, the serif headline, the featured episode, the rows by parsha.



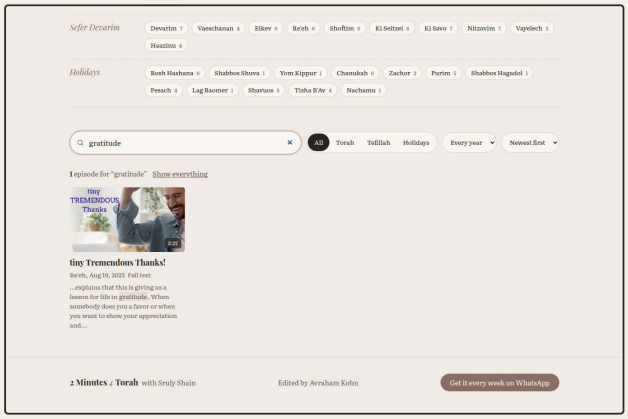
The first full draft on a computer.



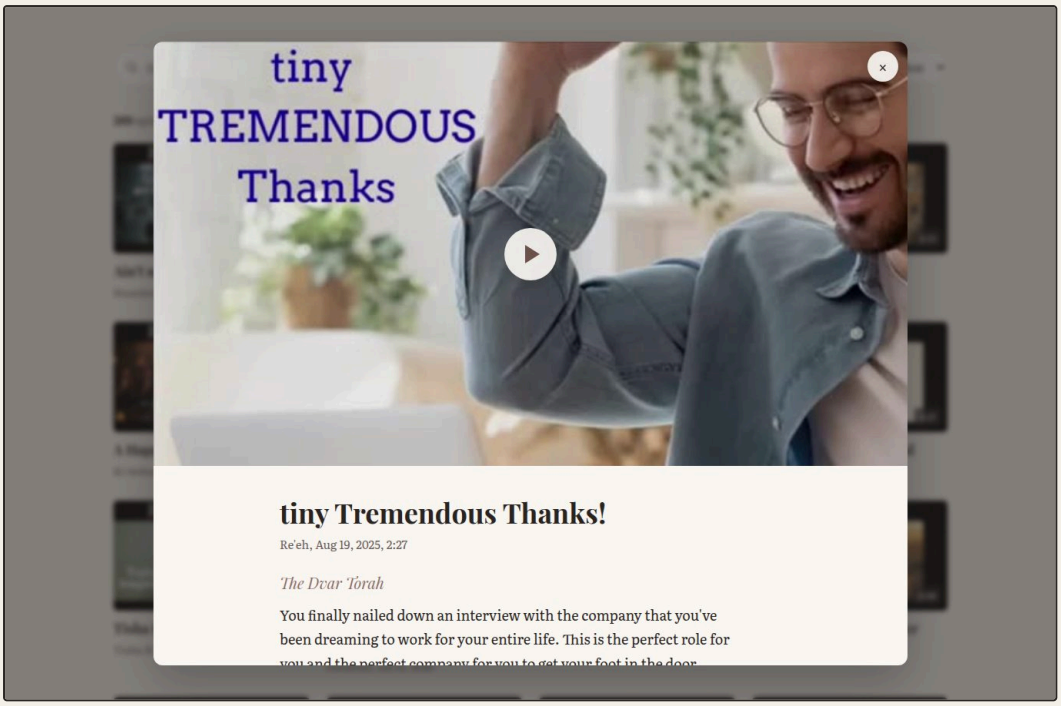
Every parsha by sefer, with episode counts.



The full library.



Search reaches into the words of every Dvar Torah, not just the titles.



The episode window: video, title, date and the full Dvar Torah.

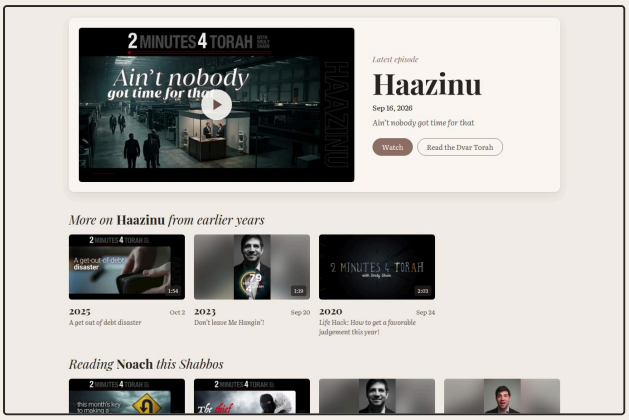
Build it where you'll look at it

Early on, one of my local folders wasn't connected, so Claude started building the site in the cloud. That's a no-no for me. I wanted it built locally, in the project folder on my Mac, like my other projects. Once that was fixed, I kept the local page open in its own browser window, and bookmarked it in my bookmarks bar next to all my other projects. It's how I work on every site I build: save the local file, open it once, bookmark it, and it's always one click away. Every time Claude made a change, I hit reload and saw it. No downloading a new version each round, no hunting for the latest file. Just one page that kept getting better in front of me.

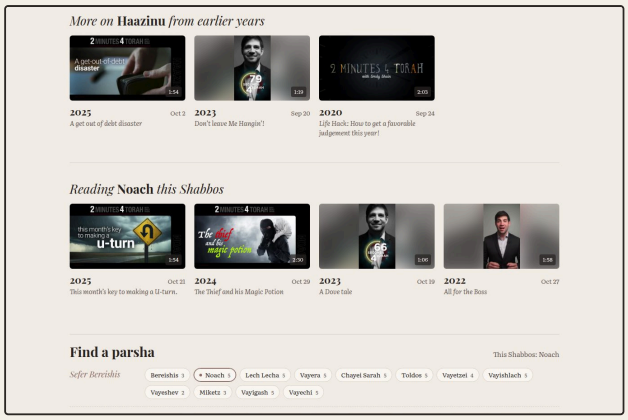
Iterating by describing

From there it was a conversation. I'd look, say what felt wrong, and see a new version in minutes:

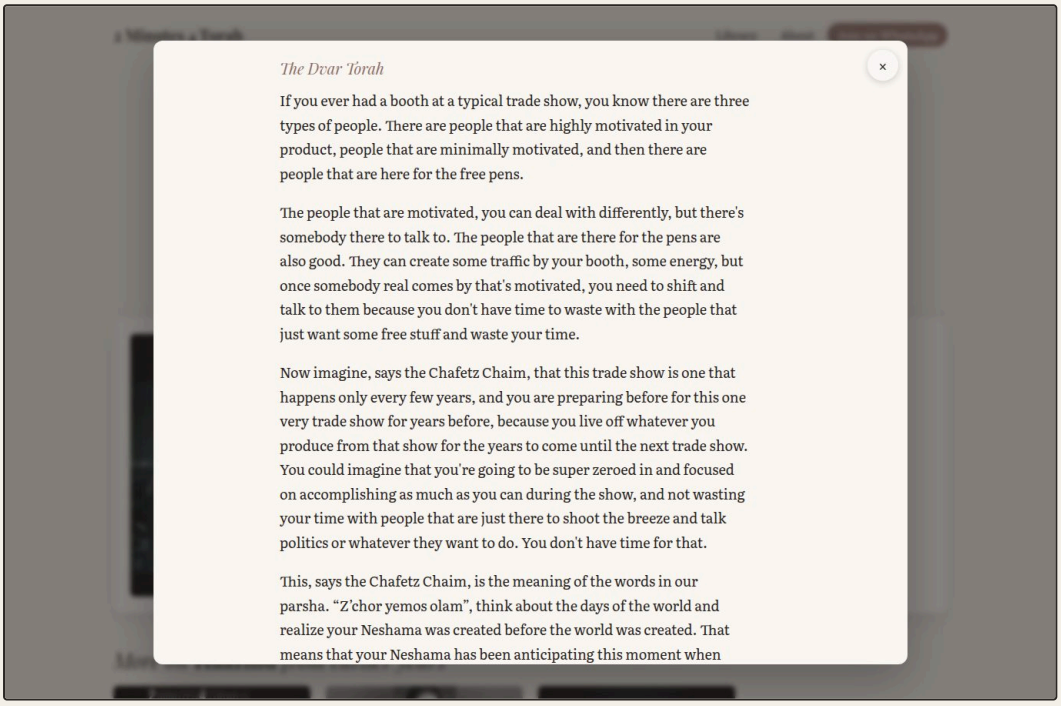
- "Make the parsha bigger and bolder, and Sruly's title smaller." The parsha became the headline.
- In the "from earlier years" rows, the year became the headline instead of repeating the parsha.
- A separator line before the "This Shabbos" row.
- A little breathing room above "Read the Dvar Torah" when the page scrolls to it.
- Only the date in the episode window, no upload time.



After: the parsha is the headline.



A separator before the "This Shabbos" row.



Spacing above the text when it opens.

The working rule: see it locally first

Every change was shown to me first in a local draft, a single file on my Mac that opens in any browser. Only after I said "deploy" did it go to the live site. That kept each round to minutes and meant nothing half-finished ever reached the public.

Every idea was built as a real page and screenshotted on a computer-sized and a phone-sized screen. There were no static mockups. What I saw is what would ship.

THE LESSON

Iterate on the real thing. A screenshot of the actual page beats any mockup, and a local preview before every publish keeps you in control.

UNDER THE HOOD

Making it run itself

The whole point was no weekly website chores. Here's how the site keeps itself current.

> This is how the site ran at launch. Two weeks later I replaced the Vimeo step with a studio of my own (chapter 10). The connector, the dating rule and the weekly rhythm below are still exactly how the site works.

At launch, Vimeo was the CMS

I upload a video to the 2M4T folder with a title in this format:

```
The Odd Couple in the Teiva (Noach)
```

That's it. The title gives the site the hook line and the parsha. The description can hold the transcript. The folder is the list.

The connector

A small program on Cloudflare (a "Worker") reads the Vimeo folder every 10 minutes, builds the episode list, and keeps it ready. Visitors get that list instantly, so the site never waits on Vimeo. The flip side: a new upload can take up to 10 minutes to appear. Today it also checks the studio's schedule on every visit, so a video never shows up before its release time, even through a direct link.

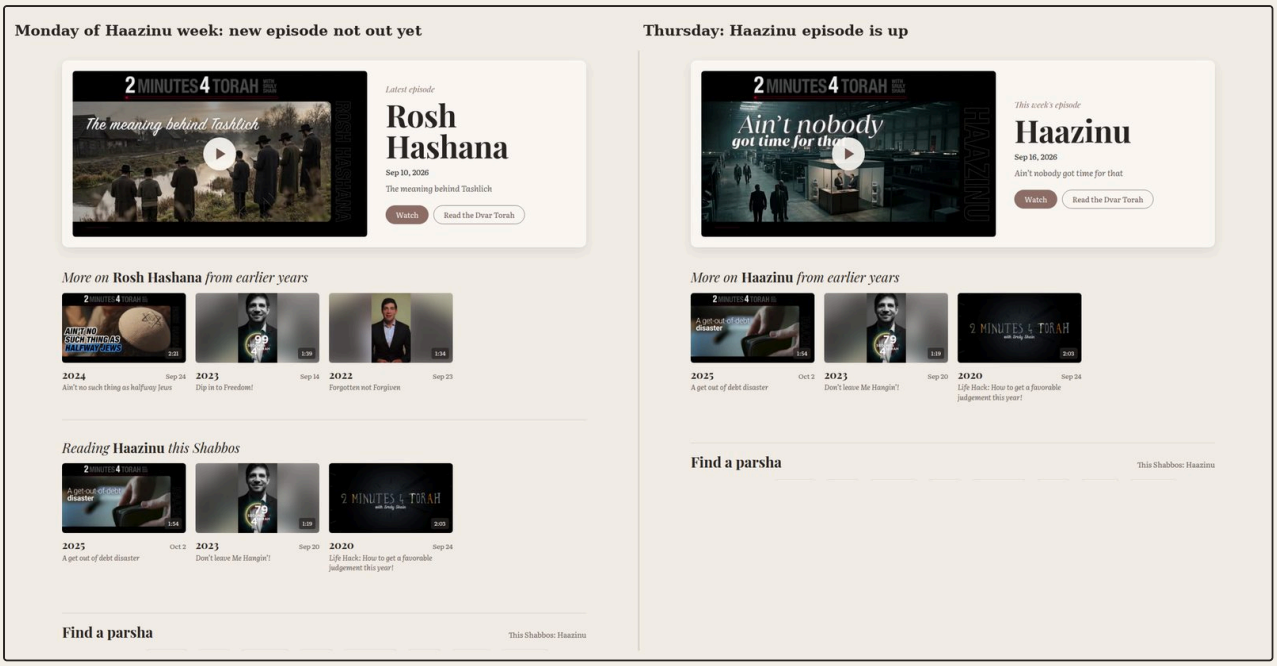
The dating rule

Library episodes keep their original air date. A new episode uploaded on or before Thursday of its parsha's week keeps its upload date. If it goes up later, it's dated that Thursday. Holiday-only episodes keep the upload date.

How the week plays out

- The day Sruly approves the new episode, I upload it. It goes to the top as "This week's episode" that same day. If it's approved Monday, the site has it Monday. It doesn't wait for his Thursday WhatsApp send-out.
- Through Shabbos and Motzei Shabbos it stays that way.
- Sunday 6 am Israel time, the site moves on to next week's parsha. The episode stays at the top as "Latest episode," and a row appears under it, "Reading Noach this Shabbos," with every past Noach episode.
- The day the new Noach episode goes up, it takes the top spot as "This week's episode."

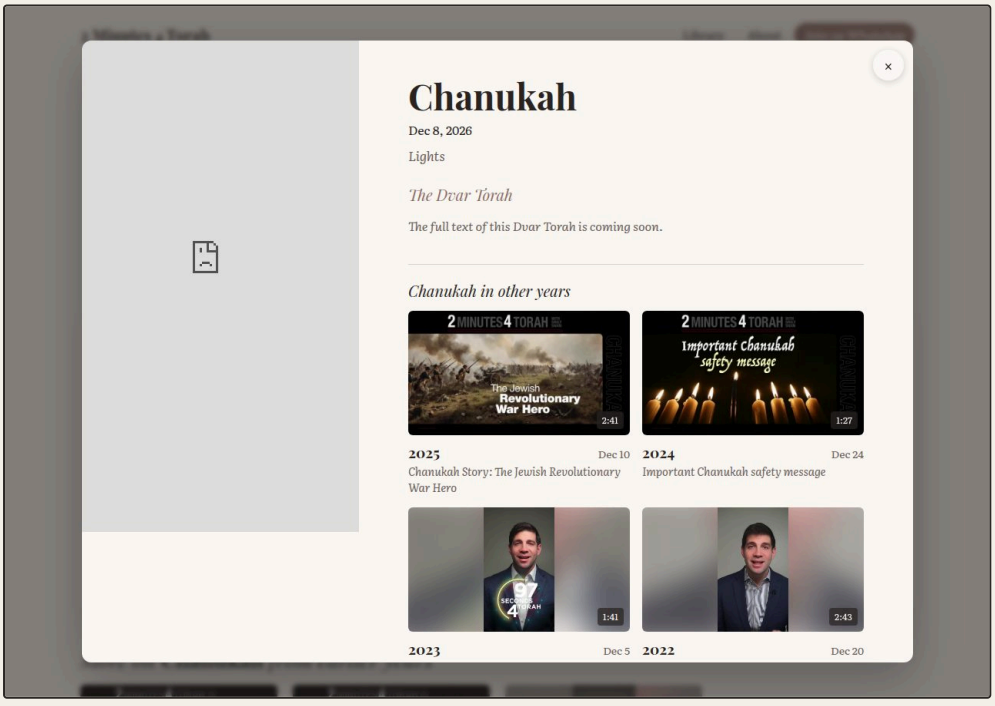
Nobody touches anything. The upload and the calendar do all of it.



Early in the week vs once the new episode is up.

Testing it for real

Remember the eight held-back episodes? I uploaded them one at a time and watched each one appear on the site, featured and filed under its parsha. Then I uploaded the first episode of Season 7 the way I will every week from now on. At first it didn't show up, and the site still had Haazinu on top. The cause turned out to be simple: the upload had never actually started. I checked instead of guessing, re-uploaded, and it worked.



The first time the site read the live Vimeo folder, with a broken video right in the middle. Beginnings are never pretty. It rarely works the first time, which is exactly why you test, fix and test again.

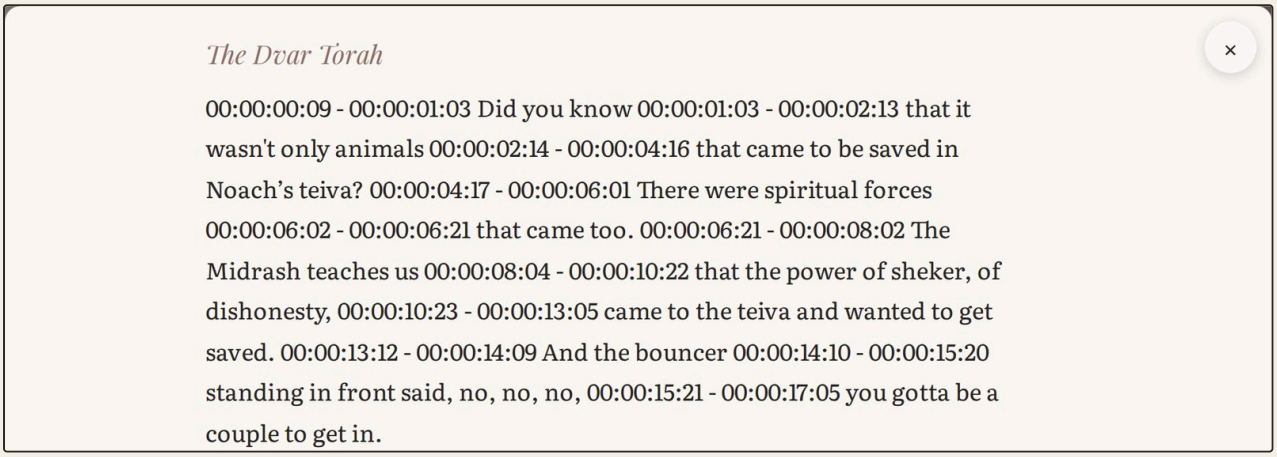
The first real week

Then came the real test: the first new episode, Noach, uploaded the normal way, with nobody watching the code. It appeared at 8:20 pm on the dot, right on the 10-minute cycle. Headline, parsha row, transcript, all on its own.

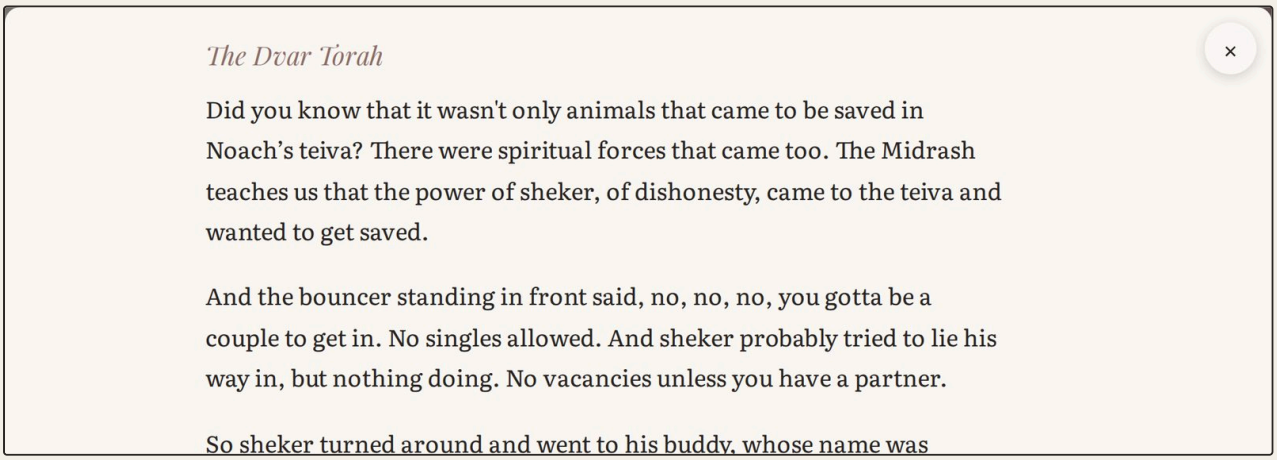
Two things weren't right, and both only showed up with a real upload:

- The row under it showed three earlier Noach episodes instead of four. A one-number fix.
- The transcript still had Premiere's timecodes in it, and the paragraphs broke in odd places. Premiere writes its caption timecodes with frames (00:00:00:09 - 00:00:01:03), a format the cleanup had never seen, so it left the text alone. Now it recognizes every timecode format, strips them, and rebuilds the paragraphs.

Both were fixed and live the same evening.



Before: Premiere's timecodes left in the text.



After: the same text, clean and in natural paragraphs.

THE LESSON

Test with real data. Holding back a few episodes let me prove the automation instead of trusting it. And the first real week will still teach you something the tests didn't.

Going live

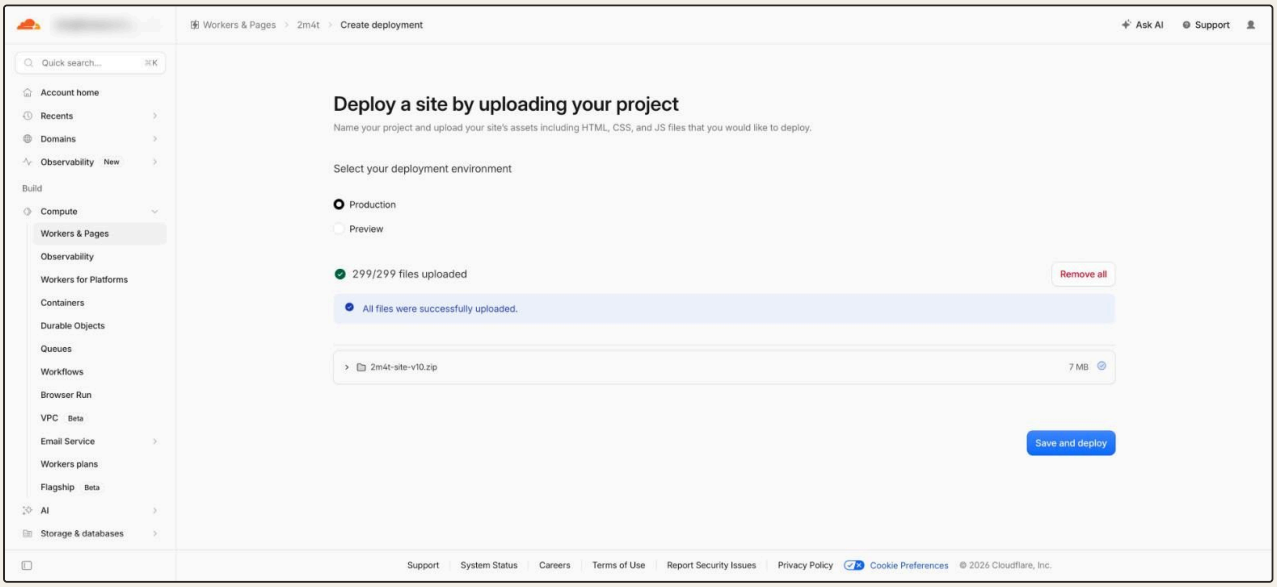
Going live had its own story. When I went to connect 2m4t.org, it wasn't in my domain account. It had expired in April and been released, and the .com had been taken by someone else in May. I bought the .org again for five years (about $67) and decided the .com wasn't needed.

Who does the clicking

On my previous sites, I did every update by hand: export the files, log in to Cloudflare, drag the folder in, wait, check. This time I did much less of that.

How the work splits:

- I open the right tabs in Chrome and log in myself. Passwords, codes and secret keys are mine; Claude never types them.
- Claude tells me exactly what to click and what to keep, and pauses whenever a login, a code or a secret key is needed.
- Once I'm logged in, or I've saved a key, I hand the reins back. Claude packages the site, uploads it to Cloudflare, publishes it and checks that the live site really changed.
- The same goes for Vimeo: Claude applied the player preset, set the thumbnails and pasted all the transcripts into the video descriptions in my logged-in browser, hundreds of videos, without me clicking through them one by one.
- At launch, the one thing I still pasted myself was code into Cloudflare's code editor. Since the studio, Claude updates the server code too, in my logged-in Cloudflare tab, and checks afterward that every setting and scheduled job is still in place. I still do the logging in, and I still paste every secret key myself.



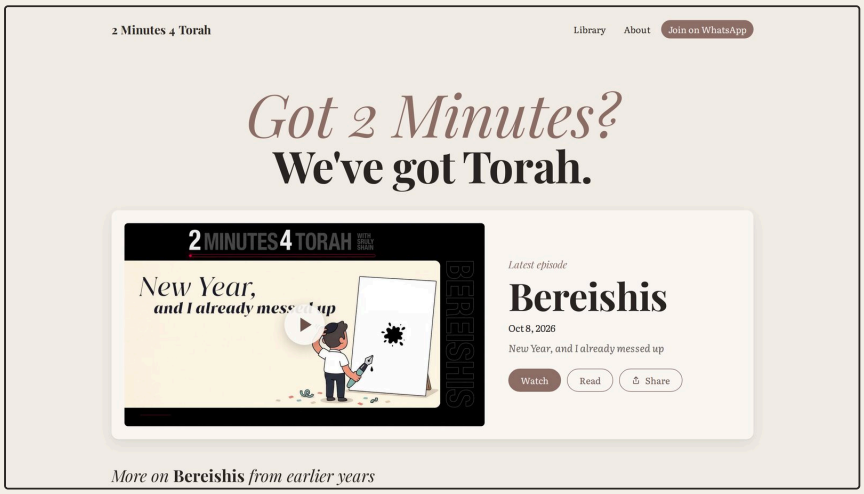
A deploy: Claude uploaded the site package, all 299 files, and is about to publish.

What it costs

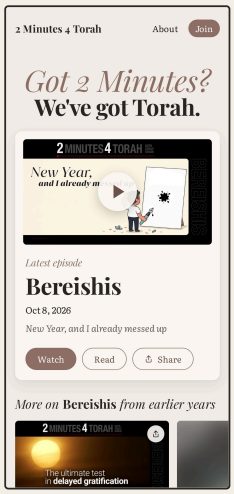
- **Hosting:** Cloudflare, free.
- **Vimeo:** about $9 a month for the most basic paid plan, with the 2M4T player customization on top. This is the only recurring cost.
- **The domain:** about $67 for five years.
- **Claude:** I'm on the Max plan, $100 a month, which works out to about $23 a week. The whole build used a bit over 20% of one week's limit. That's roughly $5 worth of Claude. Really, really cheap.

The studio didn't change the bill. Same Vimeo plan; the sign-in codes and mailbox emails go out through Resend, free on the plan I already use for my family sites; the studio's database is free at this size; and the Claude side came to maybe another dollar or two.

That's it. A self-updating archive of every episode for about $9 a month, plus a one-time build that cost less than a nice dinner.



The live site.



And on a phone.

THE TRANSCRIPTS

Every word of every episode

I wanted the full Dvar Torah written out under every video, searchable by any word. The problem: there were no transcript files for most of the archive.

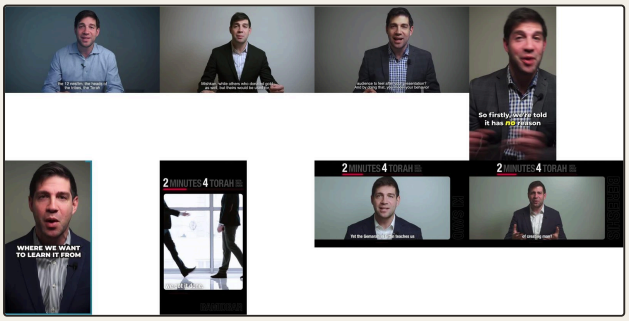
Getting them the traditional way would have meant opening years of old Premiere projects one by one and exporting the captions. Hours of manual work. And for many of the recent episodes it wasn't even possible. My caption workflow goes: transcribe, create captions, fix every spelling, and then upgrade the captions to a graphic so I can give them a slight animation. Once captions become a graphic, there's no easy way back to a caption file, and the text in the graphic is the corrected version, not the original transcription.

So I went the other way, and leaned on AI wherever it could help. Nearly every episode has Sruly's captions burned into the picture, captions I'd cut and spelled correctly myself over the years.

Claude read them straight off the video overnight while I slept, frame by frame, the way you'd read subtitles. Then they were joined into sentences and paragraphs without changing a single word. It worked beautifully.

It was harder than it sounds:

- Each season puts its captions in a different place and style, so the reading area had to be found season by season.
- The vertical seasons use big, bold white captions with a black outline, often over busy backgrounds like striped shirts, so the reading was tuned to that style.
- Season 5 highlights key words in red, which the white filter dropped. A second pass reads the red words and merges them in.
- Some episodes have no burned-in captions at all. Those 11 are listed and waiting for their caption files.



Finding where the captions sit in each season.



Caption styles in the vertical seasons.



Season 5's red highlight words.

The result: 278 of 289 episodes have the full written Dvar Torah (I plan on transcribing the remaining 11 videos sometime soon). The archive's text is built straight into the site, and a copy also went into each video's Vimeo description. New episodes get their text from the studio (more on that below).

Dialogue episodes

One Yisro episode is a conversation between a father and son. When I edited it, I'd cut the captions so only one speaker is on screen at a time. That turned out to be useful: the site uses those breaks to give each speaker their own line.

Newer episodes mark a back-and-forth differently: I put a dash at the start of each speaker's line in the captions. The site now gives every one of those dashes its own line, styled as a turn in the conversation. A dash in the middle of a sentence is left alone, and the narration after the last line goes back to a normal paragraph. The rule runs when the page shows the text, so it fixed old episodes too, without touching them.

But in their eyes, they wanted Eliezer to just eat the food in front of him. So when Eliezer said, I'm not going to eat until we finish having this discussion, they said, okay, sure. What do you want to talk about? He said,

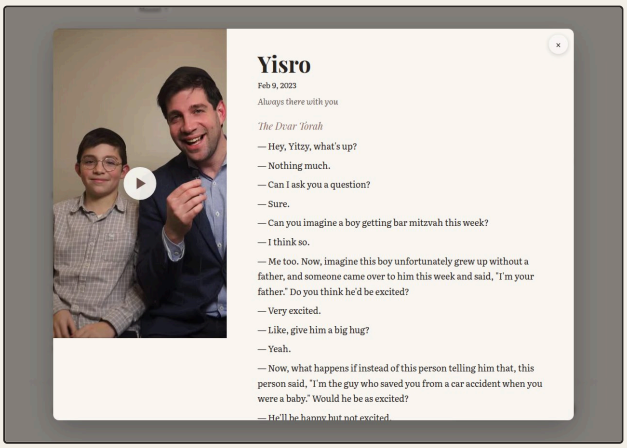
— I want Yitzchak to marry Rivkah.

— Sure!

— I want Rivkah to go back to Yitzchak and live there.

— Whatever you want. Sure. Let's eat.

Chayei Sarah: each dash in the captions becomes its own line.



A dialogue episode, one speaker per line.

From now on

I export the captions from Premiere and paste them into the studio's caption box. An SRT, Premiere's own caption text, or paragraphs all work. Under it, "How it reads" shows the finished text the way a visitor will see it, and if a word or a paragraph break is off, I fix it right there. The site strips the numbers and timecodes, rejoins the lines, and rebuilds the paragraphs. Words are never changed.

The paragraphs break where a speaker naturally would: at the longer pauses between captions, and before the lines that open a new thought ("So," "Now," "But"), at about 50 words each. The cleanup runs twice, once when the episode list is built and again on the page, so a messy paste never reaches a visitor.

THE LESSON

AI is great at the tedious middle. It read the captions of 280 videos overnight. Every judgment call, every low-confidence word, was flagged for a human.

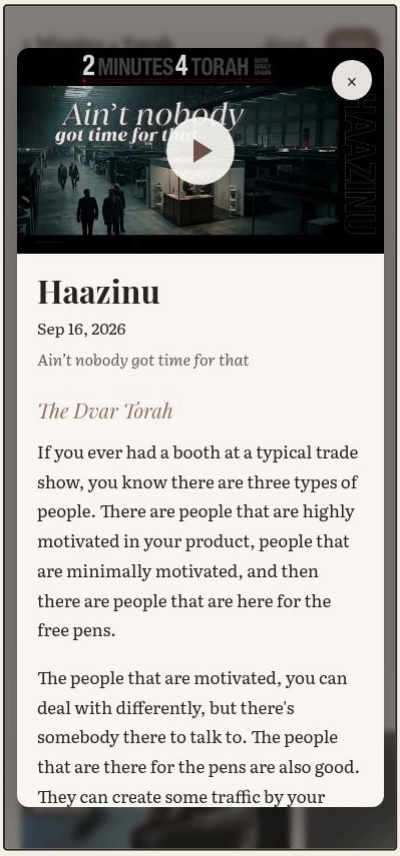
THE POLISH

The morning after: polish

The next morning I used the site like a visitor, and wrote down everything that bugged me.

Speed

The first version was one beautiful 7.8 MB file. On a phone it felt broken, and the first visitor waited up to 14 seconds for the episode list. I split the page into a small file plus images that load as needed, and kept the episode list ready ahead of time. The list now arrives in about a sixth of a second.



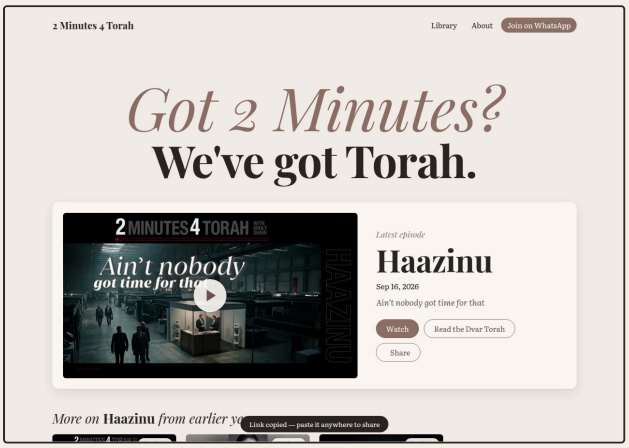
The lightweight version on a phone.

Sound

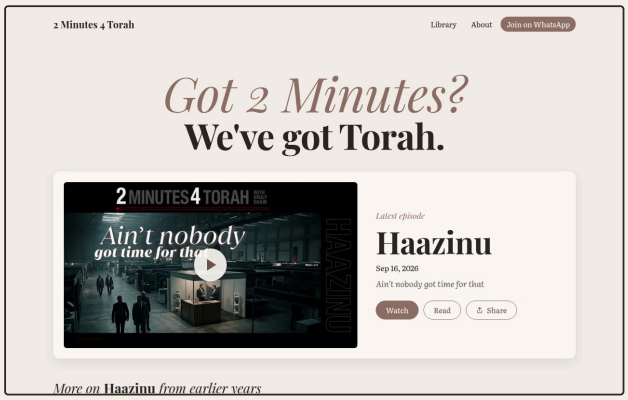
Videos started muted on my Mac, because browsers mute videos that start themselves. Now the real player loads when the episode opens, and the visitor's own click starts it with sound.

Small things that make it feel finished

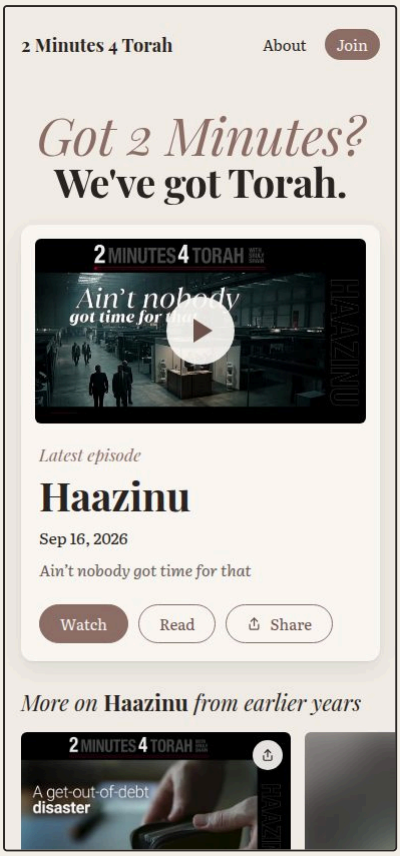
- "Full text" became an underlined "Read the Dvar Torah" link that jumps straight to the text.
- Rows show four episodes. When a parsha has more, a "See all" button shows them all in one place.
- The empty search box suggests "a word from the Dvar Torah."
- A share button on every episode, like the one on my Inspiration Corner. On a phone it opens the share sheet; on a computer it copies the link. The link opens straight to that episode.
- Watch, Read and Share on one line under the featured episode, and a clean share icon on every thumbnail.
- Long names like Nitzavim-Vayelech with Rosh Hashana: the parsha stays the headline and the Yom Tov drops to a smaller italic line underneath.
- The headline about 20% smaller on computers, unchanged on phones.



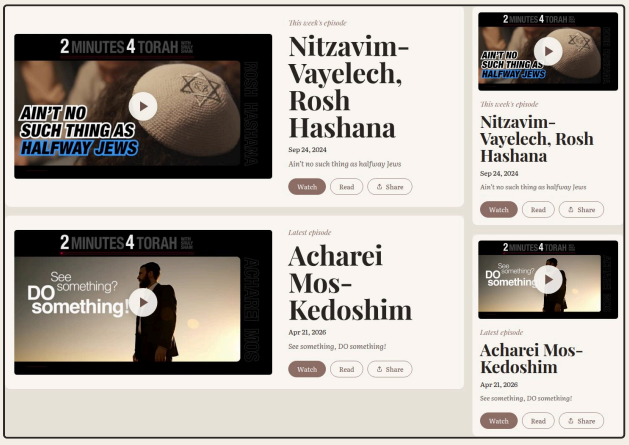
First try at share: its own line.



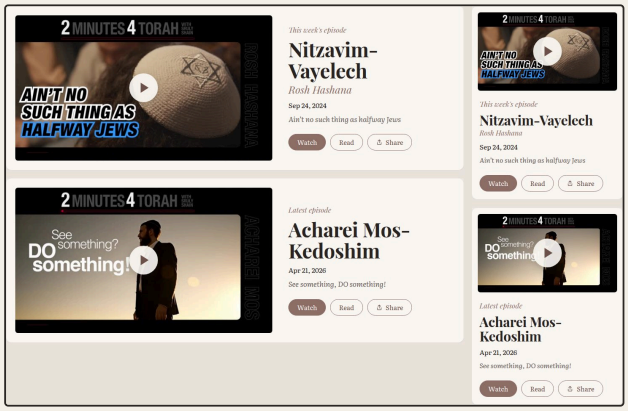
Final: Watch, Read, Share on one line.



Icon-only share on thumbnails.



Before: the parsha and the Yom Tov crowded into one oversized headline.



After: the parsha as the headline, the Yom Tov on its own line.

THINKING AHEAD

The backend that thinks ahead

This is the part visitors never see, and the part I'm proudest of. None of it needs anyone to think about it.

The week moves on Sunday morning, Israel time

At first the site switched weeks on Shabbos itself, and at different moments around the world. Now it moves on at Sunday 6 am Israel time, for everyone at once. Someone checking right after Havdalah still sees that week's parsha.

A calendar for 50 years

The weekly parsha schedule is loaded through 2076. It was generated independently and checked against the original 10-year calendar, entry for entry. It adds almost nothing to the page.

The spelling safety net

Titles come from different places: Sruly's message, a quick rename, and now the file name the studio reads when I drop a video in. Over the years the same parsha has been spelled many ways: Eikev and Ekev, Shelach and Shlach, Nasso and Naso. On the site, everything shows one way: the way it's been spelled on 2M4T all these years.

How it decides, in order:

01 **Known spellings** are mapped: Ekev becomes Eikev, Sukkot becomes Sukkos, Hanukkah becomes Chanukah.

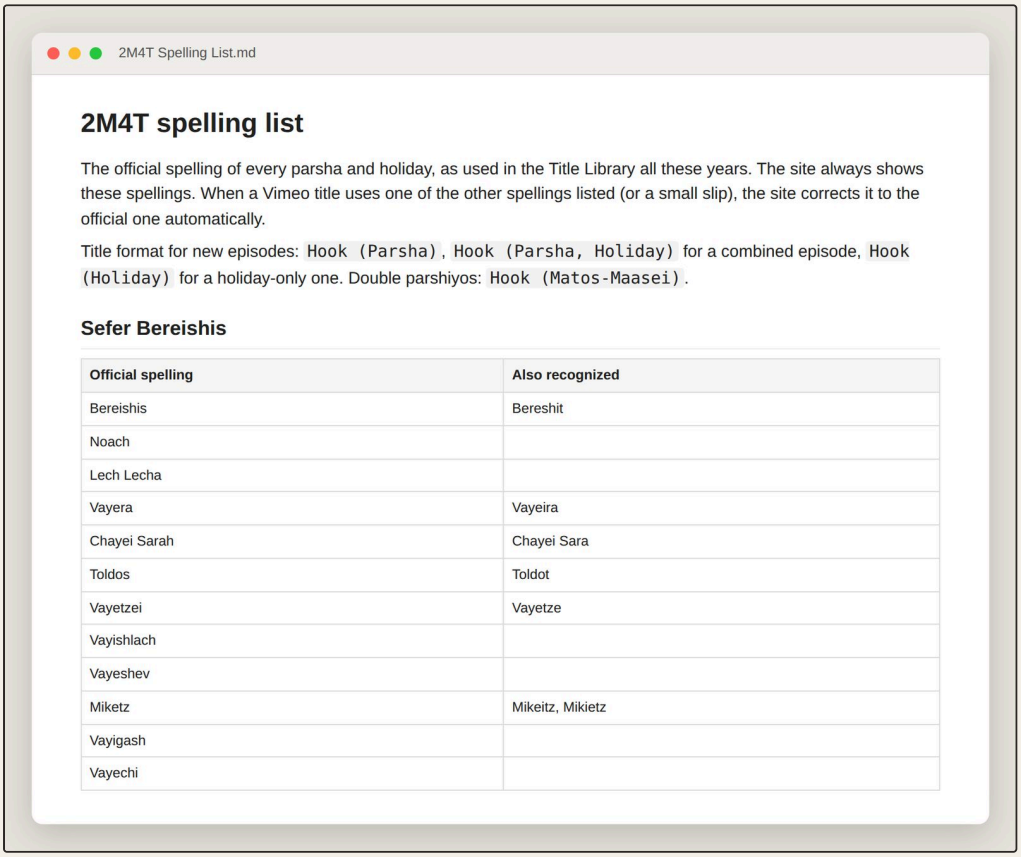
02 **Sounds-alike with small slips.** Names are compared by sound: t and s, ch and h, tz and z, c and k, ei and e count as the same, and doubled letters are ignored. One slip is allowed in short names, two in long ones.

03 **The upload date breaks ties.** If a slip is equally close to two parshiyos, the site picks the one whose Shabbos is within three weeks of the upload. "Vayra" could be Vayera or Vaera. Uploaded in late October, it's Vayera. Uploaded in early January, it's Vaera.

04 **Otherwise, as typed.** If it still can't tell, it shows the name exactly as typed rather than guessing wrong.

AS TYPED	UPLOADED	SITE SHOWS
(Bereishit) / (Bereshis) / (Breishis)	any	Bereishis
(Sukot) / (Sukkoth) / (Sukkot)	any	Sukkos
(Vayishlah)	any	Vayishlach
(Mikets, Chanuka)	any	Miketz, with Chanukah underneath
(Kdoshim)	any	Kedoshim
(Vayakel-Pekudei)	any	Vayakhel-Pekudei
(Mattos and Masei)	any	Matos-Maasei
(Ki Tisa) / (Yitro) / (Shemot)	any	Ki Sisa / Yisro / Shemos
(Bereishit, Simchat Tora)	any	Bereishis, with Simchas Torah underneath
(Vayra)	late October	Vayera
(Vayra)	early January	Vaera
(Vayra)	July	Vayra, as typed

The one thing it can't catch is a correctly spelled but wrong name. That still needs a human eye.



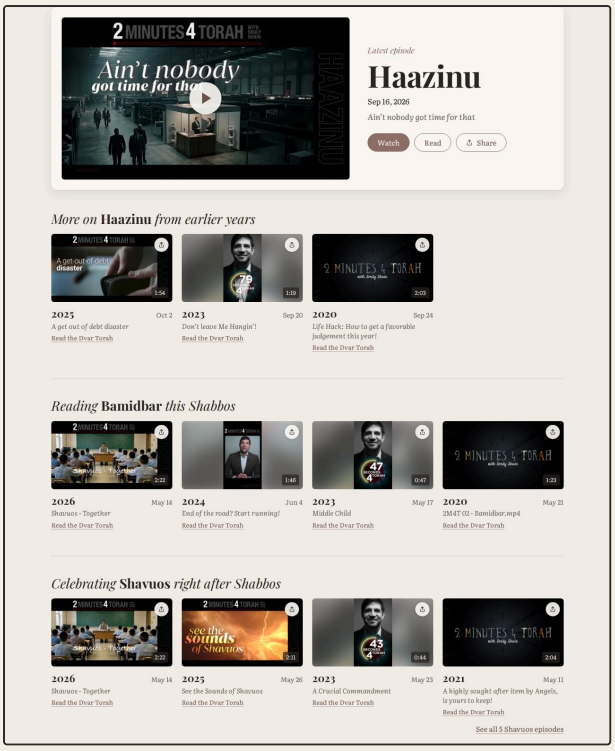
The official spelling of every parsha and Yom Tov.

Yom Tov weeks and special Shabbosos

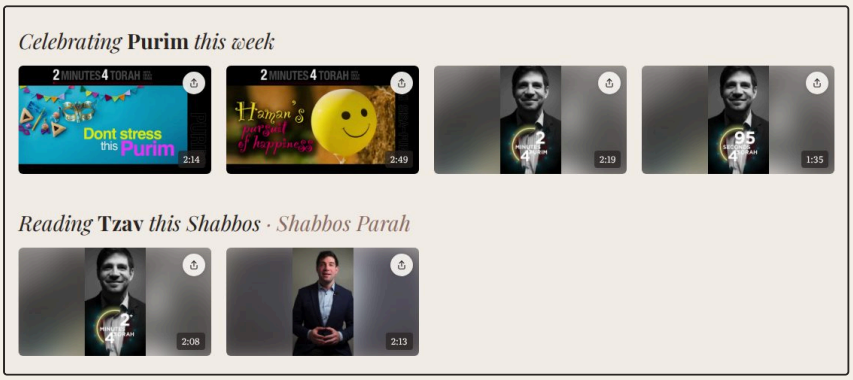
The site also knows every Yom Tov and special Shabbos for the same 50 years, so the row under the featured episode always says what's actually coming.

YOM TOV	ROW READS
Sukkos, Shemini Atzeres, Simchas Torah, Chanukah, Purim, Pesach, Shavuos, Lag Baomer, Tu B'Shvat	Celebrating Pesach this week
Rosh Hashana	Welcoming Rosh Hashana this week
Yom Kippur	Preparing for Yom Kippur
Tisha B'Av	Observing Tisha B'Av this week

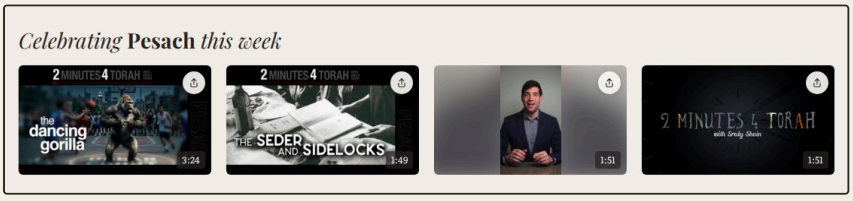
- When Shabbos itself is Yom Tov, the Yom Tov row replaces the parsha row, so the site never jumps ahead with the wrong parsha.
- When Yom Tov is midweek, both rows show, Yom Tov first.
- When Yom Tov starts right after Shabbos (Sunday), there's no time to watch once it begins. So all week its row shows under the parsha row: "Reading Bamidbar this Shabbos," then "Celebrating Shavuos right after Shabbos." This happens about 95 times in the next 50 years: Shavuos, Purim, Tisha B'Av, Chanukah, Lag Baomer, Simchas Torah, and Pesach a few times. (I caught this one while reviewing *this very guide*, after the site was already live. More on that in chapter 12.)
- Special Shabbosos ride along on the parsha line: "Reading Tetzaveh this Shabbos · Shabbos Zachor."
- If the newest episode is the Pesach episode and it's Pesach week, it's "This week's episode."
- No episodes yet on a Yom Tov? No row until there's something to show.



Shavuos starts Sunday: the Shabbos row first, then Shavuos underneath, all week. The featured episode is Haazinu only because it was the latest upload when I tested this. In a real Bamidbar week, the top spot would hold that week's new episode.



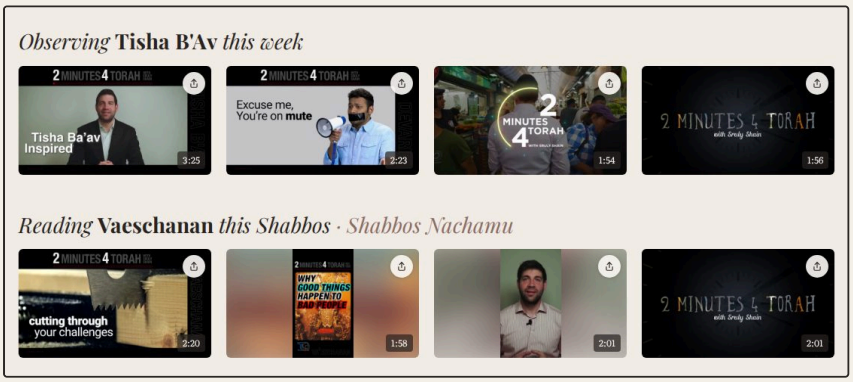
Purim on Tuesday: the Purim row first, then the parsha with Shabbos Parah.



Shabbos is Pesach: the Pesach row replaces the parsha row, so the site never jumps ahead with the wrong parsha.

WEEK OF	THE SITE SHOWS
Oct 12, 2026 (regular week)	Reading Noach this Shabbos
Dec 7, 2026 (Chanukah)	Celebrating Chanukah this week, then Reading Miketz this Shabbos
Mar 15, 2027	Reading Vayikra this Shabbos · Shabbos Zachor
Mar 21, 2027 (Purim on Tuesday)	Celebrating Purim this week, then Reading Tzav this Shabbos · Shabbos Parah
Apr 19, 2027 (Shabbos is Pesach)	Celebrating Pesach this week, with no parsha row
May 16, 2029 (Shavuos starts Sunday)	Reading Bamidbar this Shabbos, then Celebrating Shavuos right after Shabbos
Jun 7, 2027 (Shabbos is Shavuos)	Celebrating Shavuos this week
Aug 9, 2027 (Tisha B'Av on Thursday)	Observing Tisha B'Av this week, then Reading Vaeschanan this Shabbos · Shabbos Nachamu
Sep 27, 2027 (Rosh Hashana on Shabbos)	Welcoming Rosh Hashana this week
Oct 11, 2027 (Yom Kippur on Monday)	Preparing for Yom Kippur
Mar 8, 2028 (Purim on Sunday)	Reading Tetzaveh this Shabbos · Shabbos Zachor, then Celebrating Purim right after Shabbos
Jul 18, 2029 (Tisha B'Av on Sunday)	Reading Devarim this Shabbos, then Observing Tisha B'Av right after Shabbos

All 1,530 Yom Tov start and end dates were checked against a second calendar source, and every special Shabbos against the parsha it always falls on.



Tisha B'Av on Thursday: the Tisha B'Av row, then the parsha with Shabbos Nachamu.

Preview any date

Add a date to the end of the site's address, and the site shows exactly what a visitor would see that week:

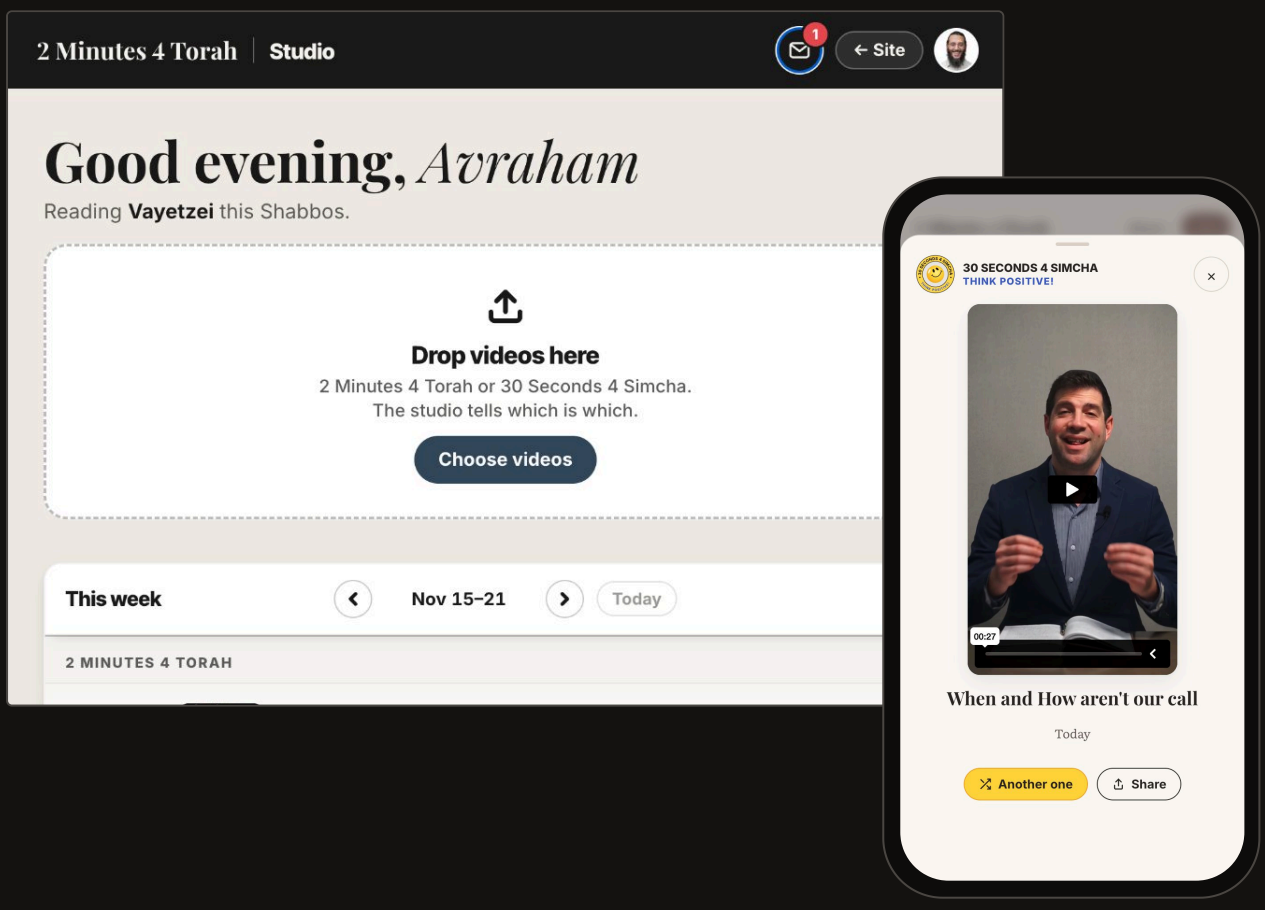
```
2m4t.org/?date=2027-03-21
```

That's how every sample above was checked before it went live.

PART TWO

The studio behind the site.

Two weeks after launch, the site grew a backend of its own: one page where Sruly and I sign in, drop in videos and decide when each one goes out. Plus a daily 30-second series, a mailbox and built-in analytics. Nobody opens Vimeo anymore.



Sign in · Drop zone · Parsha calendar · Scheduling · Mailbox · 30 Seconds 4 Simcha · Analytics

Outgrowing Vimeo

For its first two weeks, the site ran exactly as planned. I uploaded to a Vimeo folder, typed the title in the house format, pasted the captions into the description, and ten minutes later the episode was on the site.

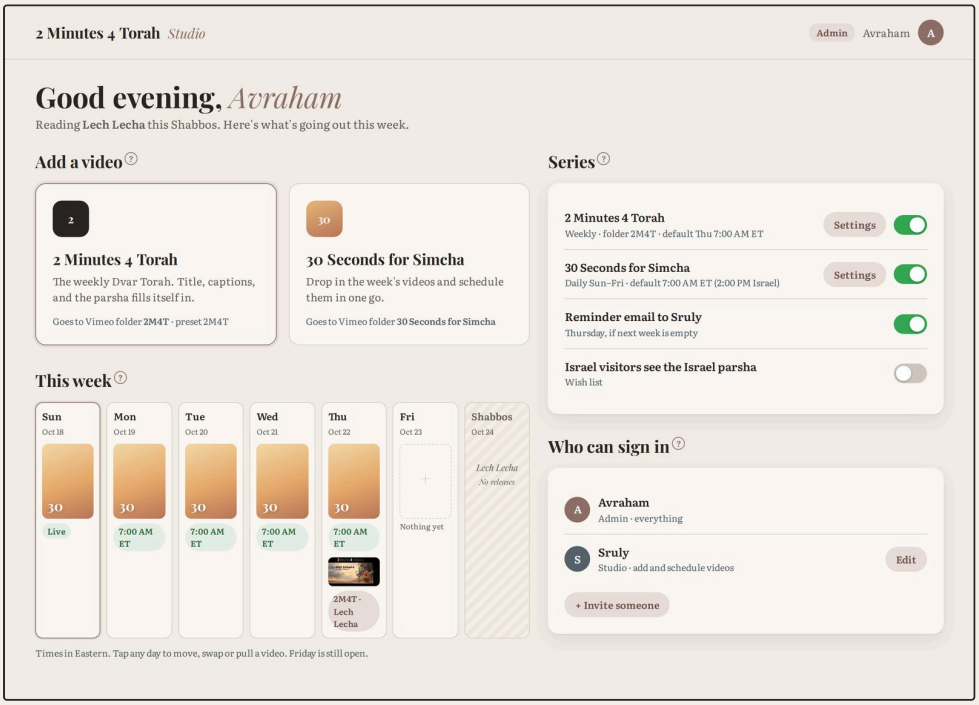
It worked, but only because I was the one doing it. Every step lived in my head: the title format, which folder, which player preset, the first-frame thumbnail, the text in the description. If anyone else ever had to upload an episode, they'd have to learn Vimeo's settings screens and my house rules at the same time.

Then Sruly asked about something new. Alongside the weekly 2 Minutes 4 Torah, he makes a daily 30-second video, 30 Seconds 4 Simcha. He records a week's worth at a time and wanted each one to go out on its own morning. Vimeo can't do that. It has no idea what a Shabbos is, or which morning comes next.

So the site needed a front door of its own: one page where Sruly and I sign in, drop in videos, and decide when each one goes out. Nobody opens Vimeo. The studio talks to Vimeo for us.

Plan first, again

Same rule as the site itself: no building before the plan. I described what I wanted, and the plan came back as a document: what the studio is, who signs in and how, how the Vimeo connection works, every screen, the rules that make it hard to break, and an "ideas to consider" list for later. Analytics went on its wish list that same week, and that list is how it ended up being built.



The first studio sketch, drawn from the plan before any code.

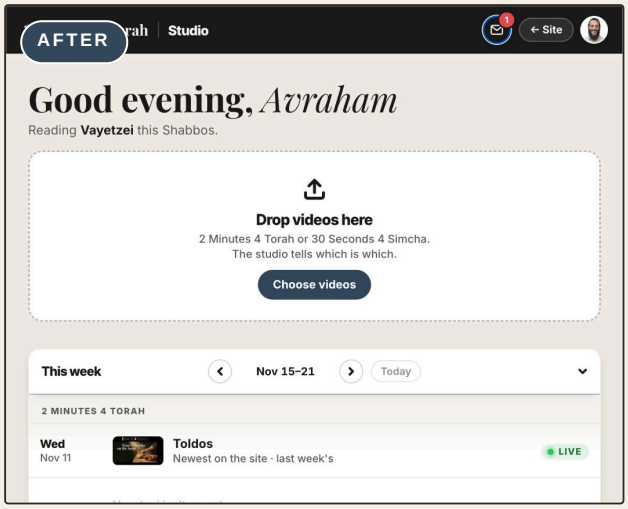
My first draft was too much

The first working draft had everything in the plan, all on screen at once. My note back was: "messy and very overwhelming."

I'd seen this before. On the project board I built for my day job, the version that worked was the quiet one: black and white, one typeface in a few weights, everything folded away until you need it. So I had the studio rebuilt from scratch on those rules. I called the new version Calm, and that's the one that's live today.



Before: the first draft. Everything in the plan, all at once.

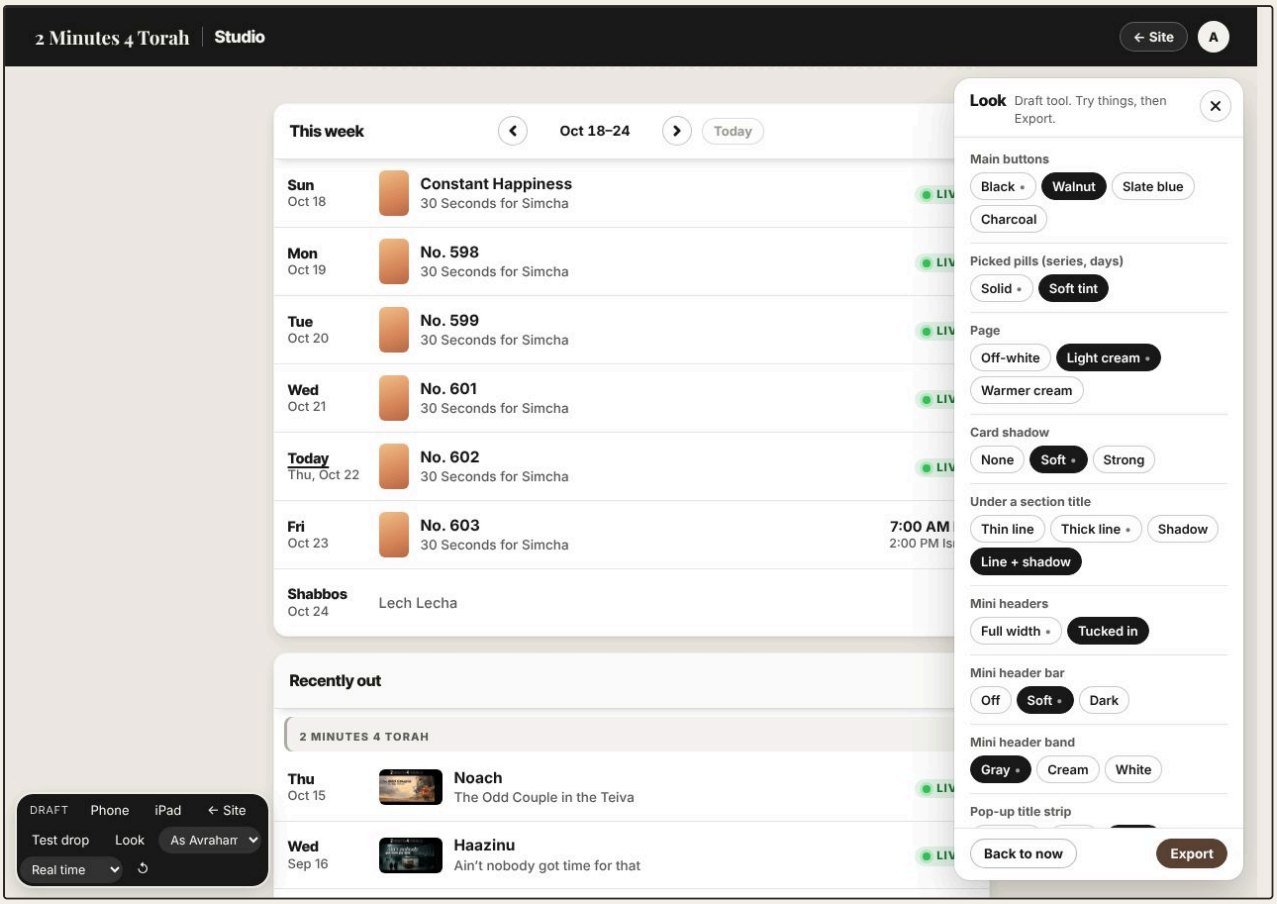


After: the live studio today. This week first, everything else folded away.

Designing by trying, not by describing

Small design choices are hard to judge from a description. "Slate blue or black buttons?" "A line under the headers, or a shadow?" Reading the options is useless; you have to see them on the real screen.

So instead of option sheets, I had Claude build me a Look panel into the draft: a short list of controls (button color, page tone, card shadow, header style, corners, row spacing), each one switching live on the real studio. I clicked through them, picked what felt right, and pressed Export. That gave me a short summary I pasted back, and my picks became the design. It had Undo and Redo, so I could try something bold and back out of it.



The Look panel: every design choice switched live on the real studio, then exported in one click.

Built locally, then live

Same working rule as the site: every change showed up first in the local draft on my Mac, with sample videos to play with, and a "Save state" button so I could demo, go wild, and rewind. Only then did it go live at 2m4t.org/studio. The live studio is the same page, with real videos instead of samples.

THE LESSON

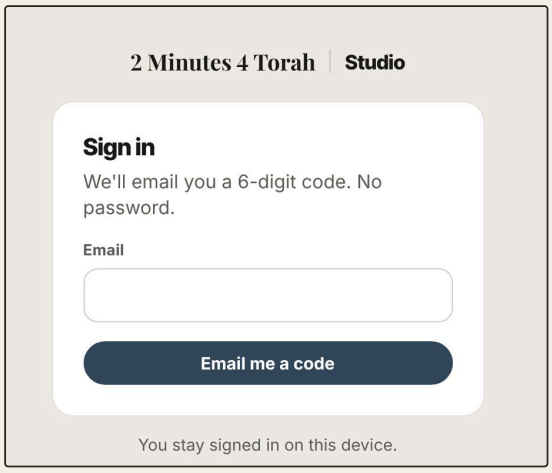
When you outgrow a tool, don't fight it. Build the front door you actually need, and let the old tool keep doing what it's good at. Vimeo still hosts every video. It just doesn't need me anymore.

A week in the studio

This is the new weekly routine, start to finish.

Signing in

No passwords. You type your email, the studio emails you a six-digit code, and you're in for 90 days. There are two roles: I'm the admin, with every setting; Sruly signs in to the studio role, which can upload, schedule and edit, but can't change the Vimeo setup or who has access.



Sign in with a code sent to your email.

Home: this week at a glance

The studio opens on this week. This week's 2 Minutes 4 Torah sits on top, and the 30 Seconds 4 Simcha videos sit underneath it, day by day. Arrows move to next week or last week, and Today brings you back. Under it, "Before this week" shows what already went out. (That's the studio home on the opening page of part two.)

Dropping in a video

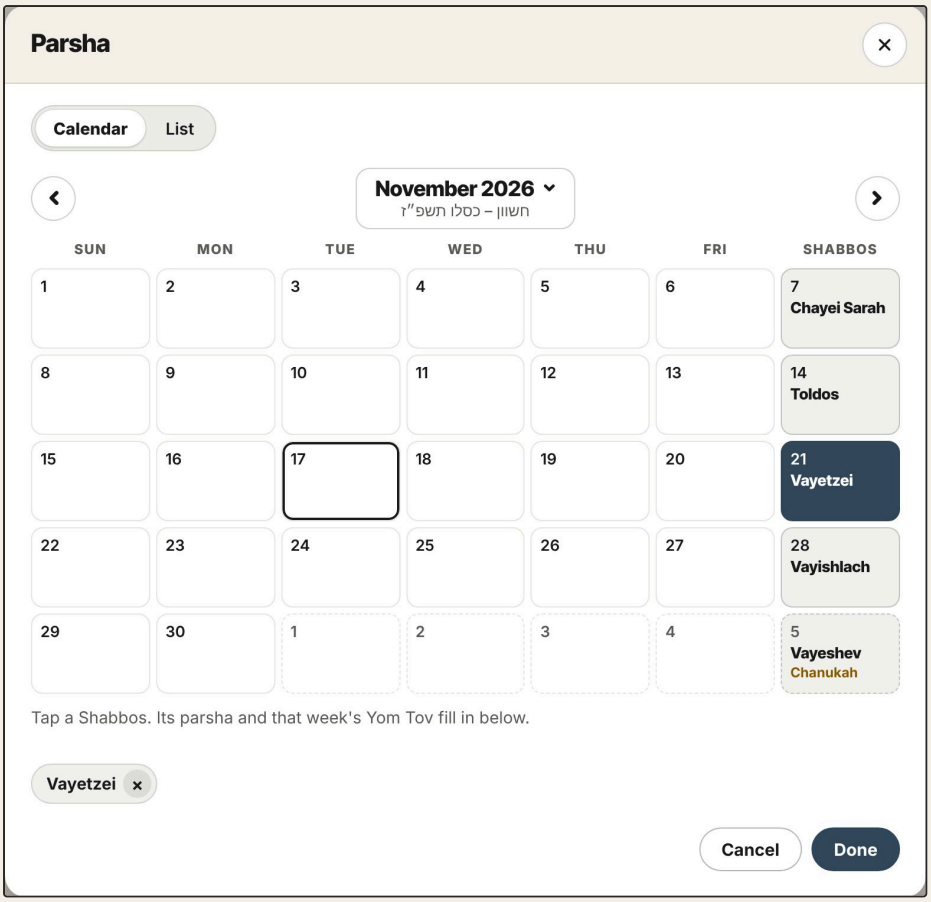
There's one drop zone. Drop one video or a whole week of them, and each gets its own panel. From the file name, the studio works out what it is: a 2M4T episode, or a numbered Simcha video. If it can't tell, it asks "Which one is this?" instead of guessing.

The video goes straight from my computer to Vimeo, not through the site, so it's fast, and if the connection drops it picks up where it left off. I keep filling in the panel while it uploads. Once it's in, the studio files it the way I used to by hand: the right folder, hidden from Vimeo's public pages, the 2M4T player preset, the first-frame thumbnail, the title and the text.

The parsha fills itself in

The parsha comes from the file name first, in any spelling (Noah, Noach, Lech Lacha, Ki Seitzei all work, through the same spelling safety net as the site). If the file doesn't say, it's this week's parsha from the 50-year calendar. If the file names a different parsha from this week's, a small red note says so, which has already caught a mislabeled file.

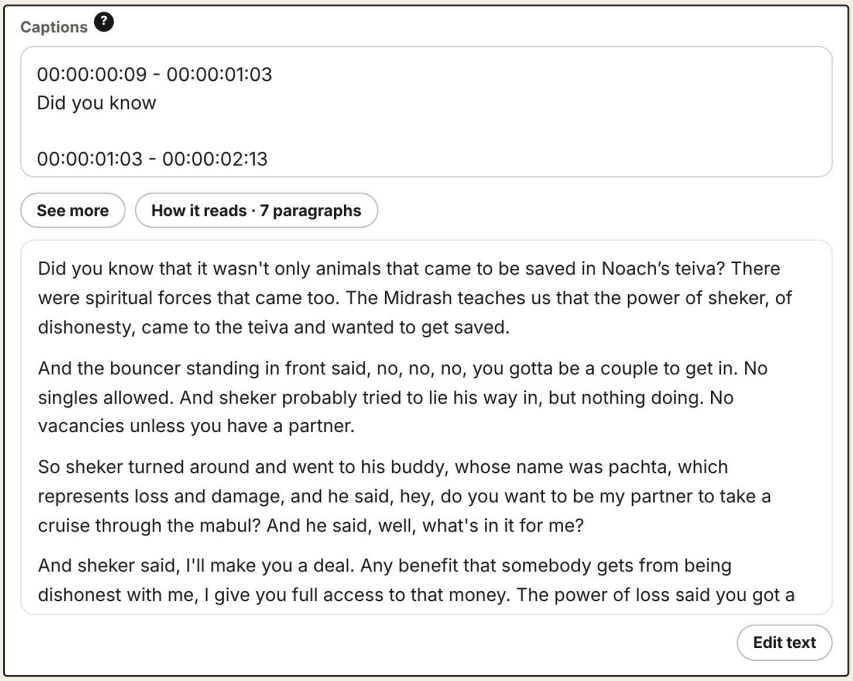
Need something else? "Change" opens a calendar where every Shabbos shows its parsha and every Yom Tov is marked. Tap a day and the parsha, the Yom Tov and the special Shabbos all fill in, each as a chip you can remove if the episode isn't about it.



The parsha calendar: every Shabbos with its parsha, the Hebrew month under the name, Chanukah marked on Vayeshev.

The captions become the text

I paste the captions from Premiere, timecodes and all. "How it reads" shows the finished Dvar Torah right under them, cleaned and in paragraphs, exactly as the site will show it. If a word is wrong, Edit text lets me fix it right there, and the site picks up the fix on the next reload.

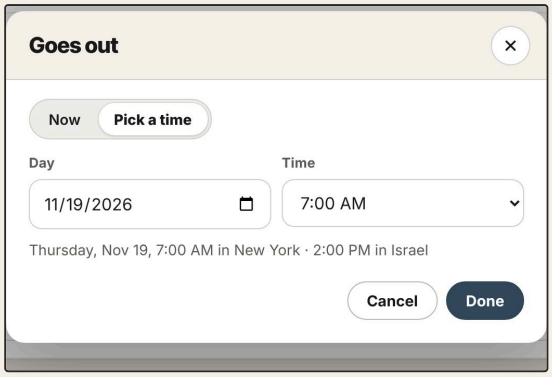


Premiere's captions go in on top; the finished text comes out underneath.

When it goes out

Publish now, or pick a day and time. Times show in New York time with Israel time next to them, because Sruly and I live in different time zones. Shabbos and Yom Tov can't be picked. The button says what will happen: Publish, Schedule, or "Publish & schedule" when a batch has both.

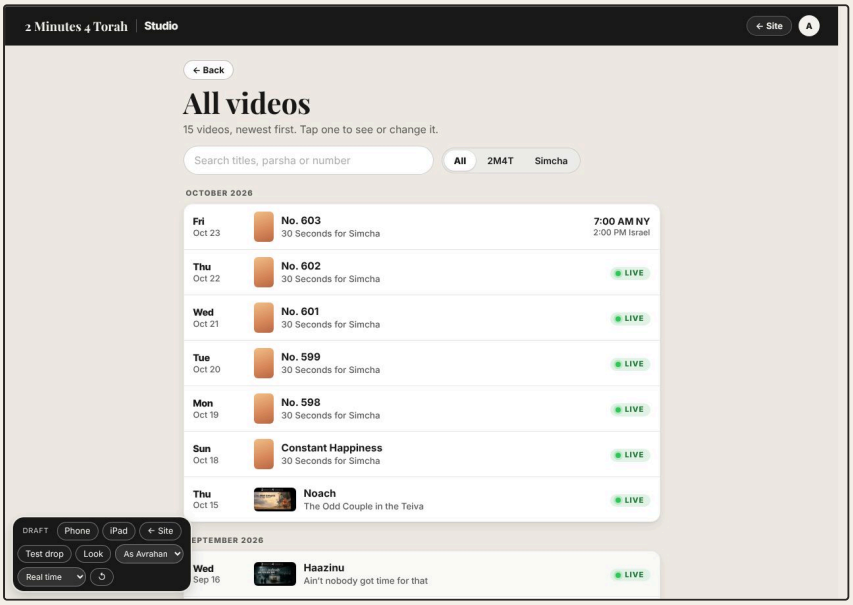
Nothing shows on the site before its time, not even through a direct link.



Pick a time: New York and Israel, side by side.

Fixing things later

Every video can be opened again from the week or from All videos (searchable, by month, with a 2M4T and Simcha filter). Change the title, the text, the parsha or the time. Take a video off the site and it goes to a Removed list with a Put back button, still on Vimeo, nothing lost. Pick several at once by dragging across them, the way you'd select files on a computer.



All videos: every episode and daily video, searchable. (Shown here in the local draft, with its DRAFT tools at the bottom.)

The mailbox

Every week, Sruly used to send me the new episode on WhatsApp: the parsha, a Google Drive link to his recording, and the title. Then I'd scroll back through the chat to find the title when I uploaded.

Now there's an envelope in the studio's top bar. Sruly writes me a note: To, Parsha, Link, Title. The parsha is already filled in, guessed as the one after the last note he sent. He doesn't even have to type the rest: pasting his usual WhatsApp message splits it into the three boxes on its own.

01

Sruly pastes his message

The same WhatsApp text he always sends: parsha, Drive link, title.

02

It splits itself

Parsha, Link and Title fill on their own. One tap on Send.

03

I get an email

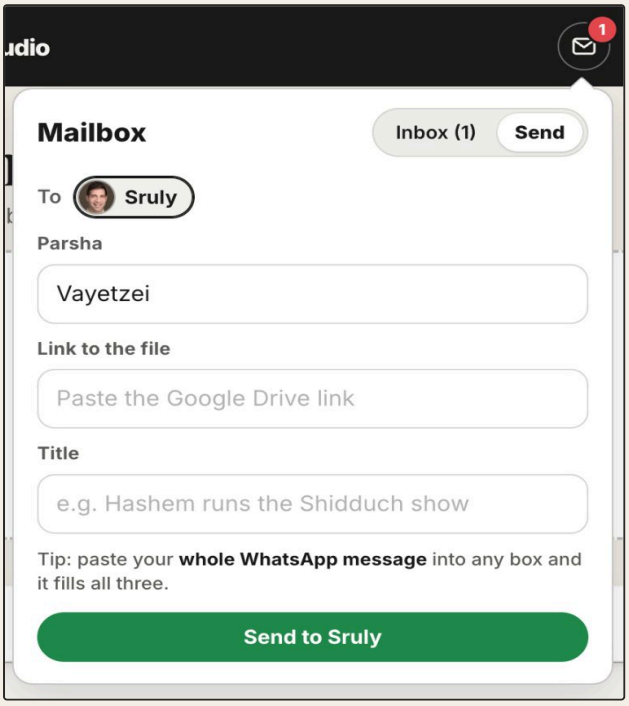
With the link, and a red count on the envelope until I open it.

04

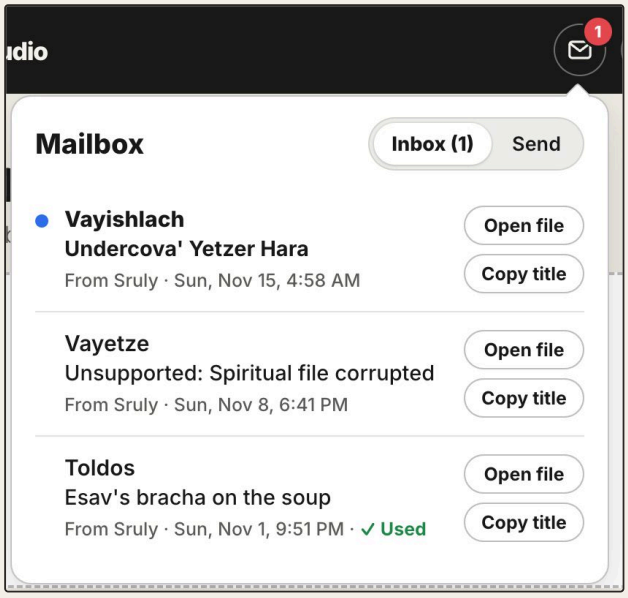
The upload remembers

Drop in the episode and the title is already there.

I get an email ("Sruly sent you Vayishlach") with the link and a button straight into the mailbox. The envelope shows a red count of unread notes.

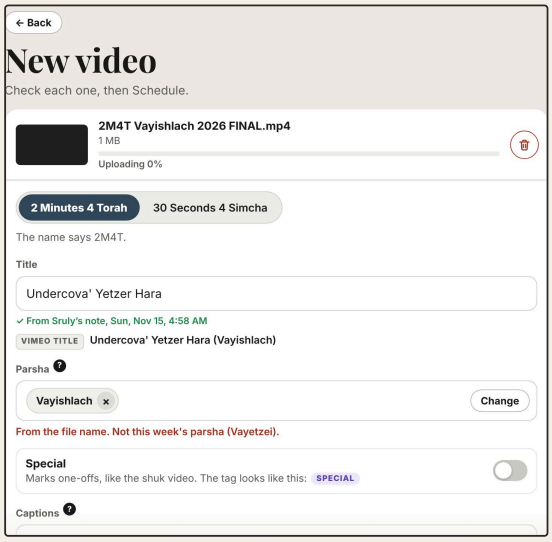


Send: the parsha is already guessed. Paste the WhatsApp message and all three boxes fill.



Inbox: newest first, unread in bold with a blue dot, and "Used" once the episode is up.

And when I upload that week's episode, the title is already filled in, marked "From Sruly's note."



Dropping in next week's file: the title arrives from Sruly's note, and a red line flags that it isn't this week's parsha.

Hard to break

- Two people saving at the same moment (or me in two tabs) don't overwrite each other; the studio merges both.
- Every save is kept: the last 500 versions, with a restore for the admin.
- Every Sunday, a full backup of the studio is emailed to me as a file.
- A Thursday reminder email, for whoever turns it on, if the coming week is still empty.

The weekly routine now



THE LESSON

Build the tool around the conversation that already happens. Sruly was already sending me the parsha, the link and the title every week. The mailbox just gave that message a home, and the upload a memory.

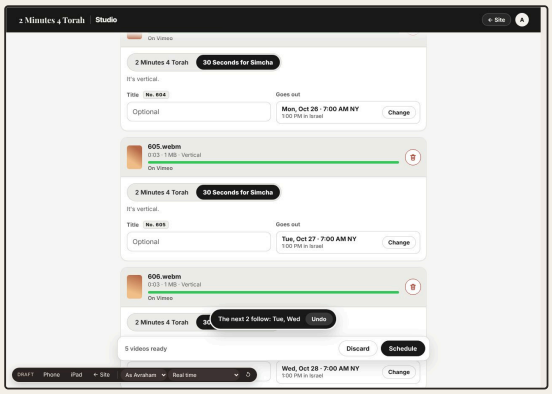
30 Seconds 4 Simcha

The daily series is what pushed me to build the studio, and it needed a home on the site too.

Scheduling by number

Every Simcha video has a number, like No. 634. Sruly records a week at a time, drops the batch into the studio, and each video lands on its own morning: one number per open morning, Sunday to Friday, skipping Shabbos and Yom Tov. Numbers line up with what's already out, so a batch picks up where the last one ended. If a number is missing, its morning stays open, and when that video turns up later it slots right in. Set one video's date by hand and the rest of the batch moves to match, with Undo. Change the time on one, and the whole batch follows.

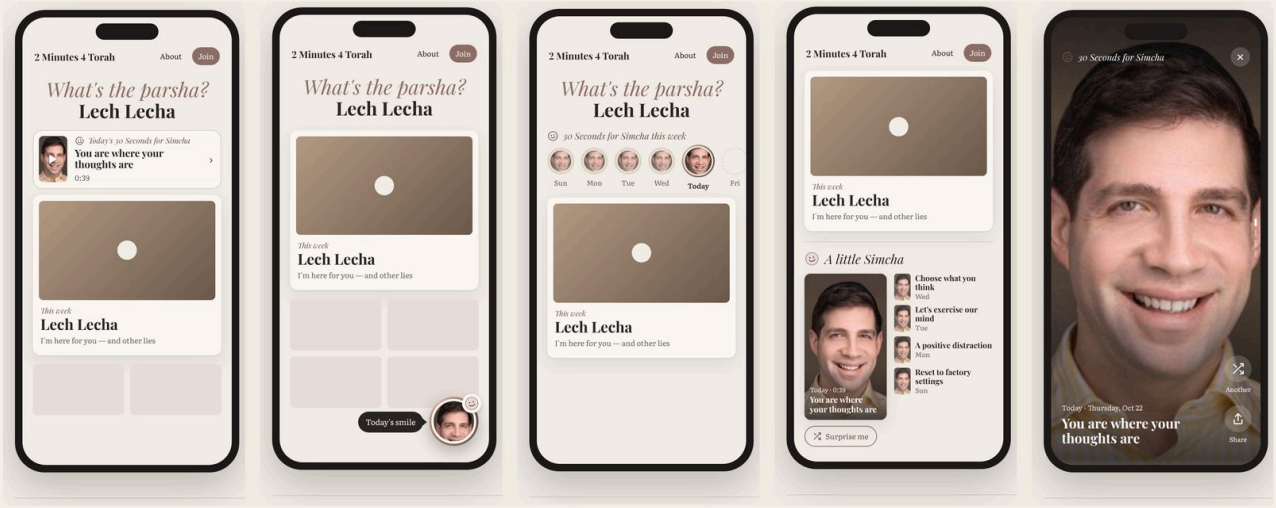
Titles come from the file names, tidied: computers turn question marks and apostrophes into underscores in file names, so "614- Why the frown_" comes out as "Why the frown?"



A batch, each on its own morning. Set one and the rest follow. (Early draft, sample files.)

Five ideas on paper first

This was a new idea, not an extension of something that already existed, so it got sketches before any code. Five ways to show the daily video: a strip under the title, a bubble in the corner, the week as six circles, a section of its own with "Surprise me," and a swipe-up page. I went with the bubble.



Five ways to show a daily video, sketched before anything was built: today's strip, the smile bubble, the week in circles, a section of its own, and a swipe-up page.

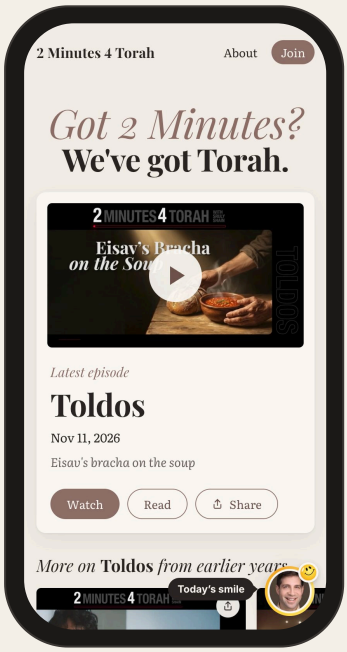
Sruly's own badge

Sruly already had a WhatsApp badge for the series: "30 Seconds 4 Simcha, Think positive!" with a tilted smiley. Rather than invent something new, I had it redrawn cleanly so it stays sharp at any size, then tuned it by eye: tighter letters, a bigger "Think positive!", the smiley tilted the way his is, with its little cheeks.

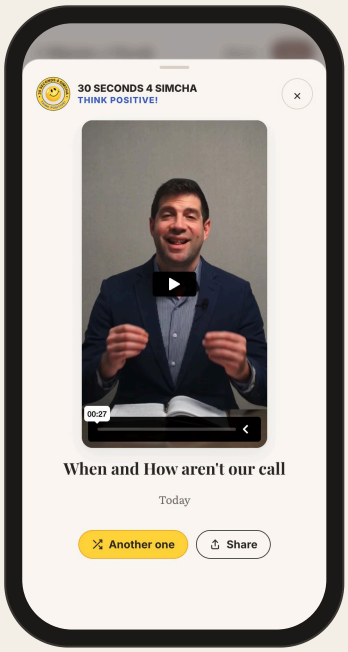
The bubble itself is Sruly's face in a circle, with a small smiley sticker on the corner and a yellow ring when there's a new video today. A little label, "Today's smile," appears next to it, and the bubble gives a small wiggle after a few seconds, then again every 20 seconds, so it's noticed without nagging.

The player grows out of the bubble

Tap the bubble and the player grows out of it, a yellow circle opening into the full player, with an easing that took a few rounds to get right. The page behind blurs and darkens. Tap outside, press Esc or swipe Back, and it shrinks back into the bubble.

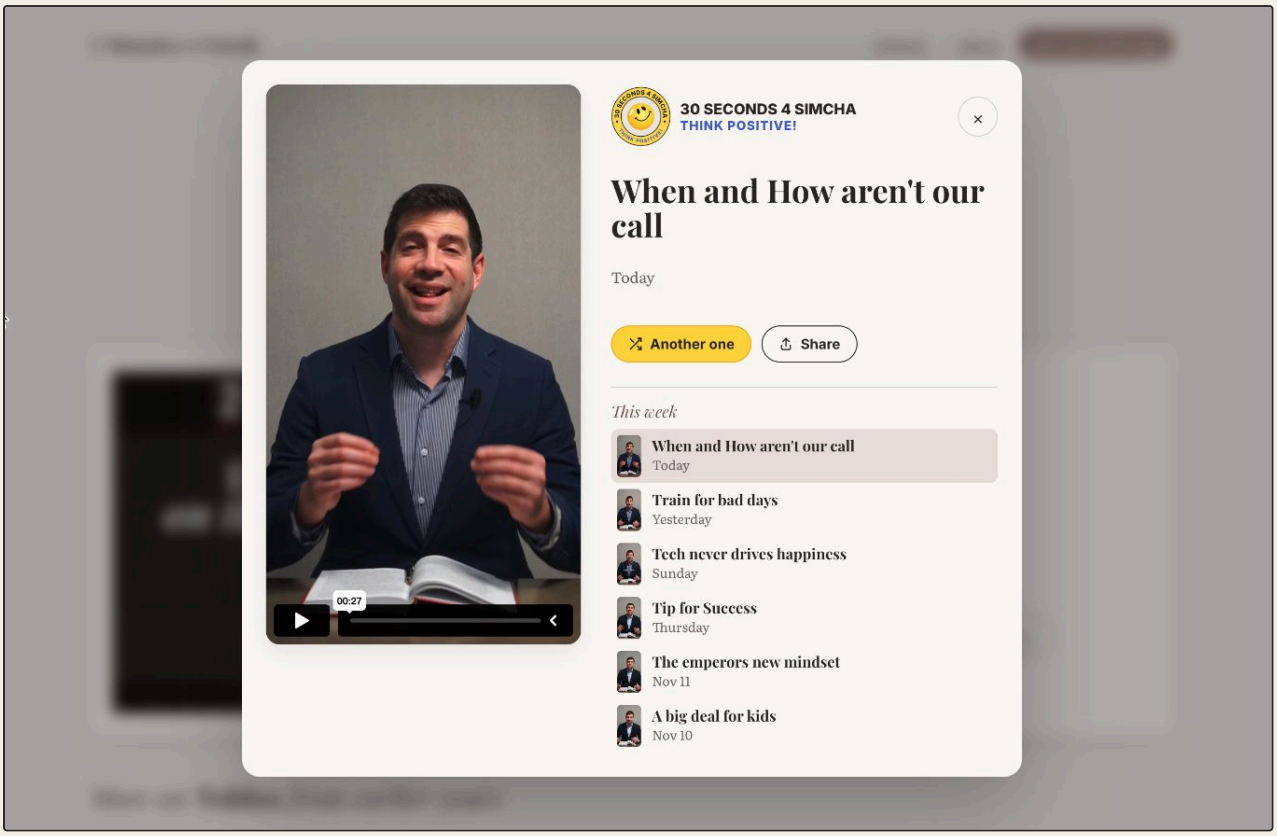


The smile bubble, bottom right, with today's label.



One tap: the player grows out of the bubble. It waits for a tap to play, with sound.

On a phone it's a sheet from the bottom. On a computer, Sruly picked a card in the middle of the screen: the video on the left, the title and buttons on the right, and the rest of the week listed underneath. "Another one" plays a different day; Share sends a link that opens straight to that video.



On a computer: a card in the middle of the page, with the whole week alongside.

A switch, off by default



Settings, On the site: one switch for everyone.

Every feature I build gets an on/off switch in my settings. The smile bubble stayed off until the real videos were in, then I turned it on. One switch, no deploy.

The iPhone surprise

On my iPhone, the video showed for a moment and then went black. Every other phone and computer was fine. The cause was the opening animation: the circle shape that makes the player grow out of the bubble stayed on after it opened, and iPhone Safari shows video inside a shape like that as black. Now the shape comes off the moment the animation ends. While I was at it, the player stopped starting on its own. It waits for a tap, so the video starts from the top with sound.

THE LESSON

Borrow what your client already loves. Sruly's badge was already his brand. Redrawing it beat any logo I could have invented, and he recognized it the second he saw it.

PART TWO · THE NUMBERS

Analytics, built in

I wanted to know how the site was doing without opening three different dashboards. So the studio has an Analytics page, right in the settings.

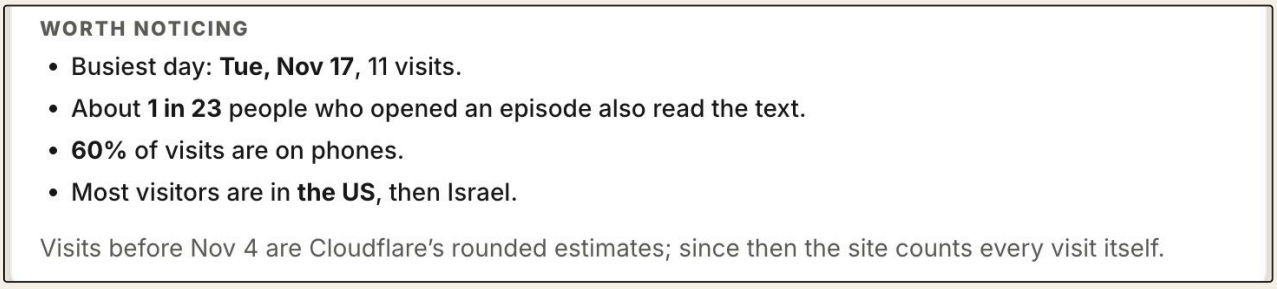
What it shows

- A row of tiles: visits, episodes opened, Dvar Torah texts read, shares, and Simcha videos opened.
- A bar chart of the last 7 days, the last 30, or everything since launch. Hover a bar to see that day.
- The most watched episodes, as the top 5 (or top 10), with the picture, the parsha and the title.
- "Worth noticing": a few plain sentences, like the busiest day, how many people also read the text, how many came on a phone, the top countries, and what people searched for.



The real numbers for the last 30 days, inside the studio.

My first version was unreadable



Worth noticing: the numbers, said in a sentence.

It was one endless list of raw numbers and video IDs. I asked for something I could take in at a glance: a chart, the top few, and a few sentences that tell me what's interesting. That's the version above.

Plays without visits

Then I noticed days with plays and no visits, which can't happen. The visits came from Cloudflare's analytics, which samples: it counts in steps of ten, so a quiet day can round down to zero, and some browsers block it altogether. The plays came from the site's own counter. So the site now counts every visit itself, once per visit, and Cloudflare's numbers fill in only the days before that and things like countries and phones.

Not counting ourselves

Anyone signed in to the studio on that browser, Sruly and me included, isn't counted. Otherwise every check I make would look like a visitor.

THE LESSON

A dashboard should answer a question, not dump data. If you can't tell what's going on in five seconds, ask for less.

THE FIXES

What broke, and how I fixed it

Not everything worked the first time. A few favorites, because the fixes were usually simple once I checked the facts:

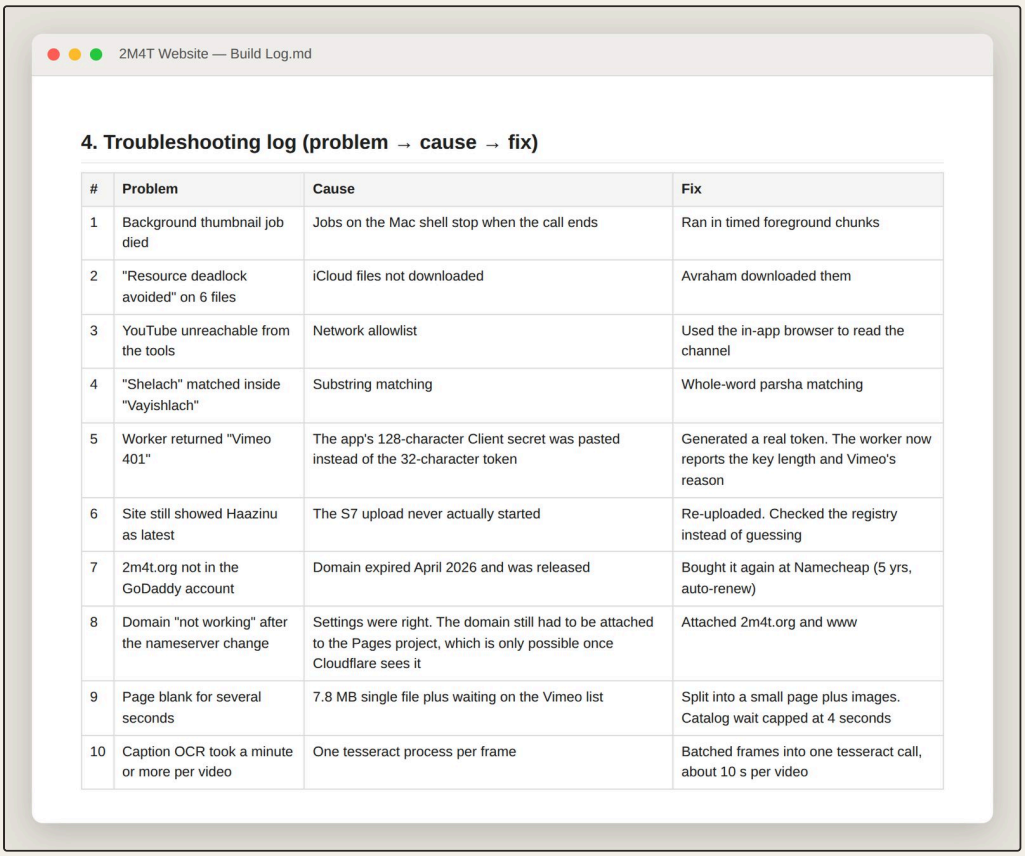
- **"Vimeo 401" error.** I'd pasted the app's secret instead of the access token. A new token fixed it, and the site now reports the key length, never the key, so it's obvious next time.

  > What's a token? Think of it as a house key you give the site so it can look inside your Vimeo account, read-only. You make it once in Vimeo's developer settings and paste it into Cloudflare. Vimeo also shows you a longer "secret" on the same screen, which looks similar but opens a different door. Paste the wrong one and Vimeo answers "401," which just means "I don't recognize this key."

- **The new episode didn't show.** The upload had never started. Checked, re-uploaded, done.
- **The domain "wasn't working."** The settings were right. The domain still had to be attached to the site, which is only possible once Cloudflare sees it.
- **"Shelach" matched inside "Vayishlach."** Parsha names are now matched as whole words.
- **Captions read as garbage on vertical seasons.** Tuning the reading to their white-with-black-outline style fixed it.
- **Red words went missing in Season 5.** The red-channel pass fixed it.
- **The first visitor waited 14 seconds.** The list is now prepared ahead of time.
- **Videos started muted.** The visitor's own click now starts them.
- **A dialogue was merged into one block.** The site now keeps the author's own line breaks.
- **Pesach week would have shown the wrong parsha.** The Yom Tov calendar fixed it before it ever happened.
- **Only three earlier episodes under the first real upload.** The row was capped at three. Now it's four, so the row is full before "See all" appears.
- **Timecodes in the first real transcript.** Premiere's frame-based timecodes slipped past the cleanup. It now handles every format and rebuilds the paragraphs at natural pauses.
- **A Yom Tov right after Shabbos had no row until it began.** Shavuos starting on a Sunday only appeared Sunday morning, when nobody's watching anymore. Caught while reviewing this guide, fixed and live the same hour.

And once the studio was live

- **A setting quietly disappeared.** Sruly and I saved at the same moment, and one save overwrote the other. The studio now merges both.
- **"Last week" showed a pile of episodes on the same day.** Episodes the studio couldn't match to the Title Library were dated by their upload day. Now they're dated by the site's own rule.
- **A deleted video was still offered as "already on Vimeo."** The studio remembered it without checking. Now it asks Vimeo each time.
- **Vertical episodes were black on Sruly's phone.** The video column was wider than the phone screen, so the video sat off to the side. Now it fits the screen.
- **The analytics showed no visits at all.** The key saved on the server had never actually been used. I made a new one and pasted it in, and the numbers came through.
- **A spelling fix in the studio didn't reach the site.** The site was still reading the text Vimeo had from upload day. Now the studio's copy wins, and a fix shows on the next reload.



Every problem, cause and fix, written down.

THE LESSON

Check the boring facts first. Most "bugs" were a pasted secret, an upload that never started, or an expired domain. Each one took a minute to verify and saved hours of guessing.

BY THE NUMBERS

By the numbers

289

episodes in the library, plus every new upload

278

with the full written Dvar Torah. The last 11 are on my list.

About 8 hours

of my time to build the site: the plan, Motzei Shabbos, Sunday, and the first real upload.

About 18 hours

to build the studio over about three weeks, my testing included.

2 people, 0 passwords

Sruly and me, signing in with a code from our email.

0 times

I open Vimeo in a normal week. The studio files every video for me.

14 s → 0.16 s

to load the episode list

50 years

of parshiyos and Yamim Tovim, already loaded

$9 a month

still the only running cost (Vimeo). Hosting, email and the studio's database are free, the domain was about $67 for five years, and Claude came to a few dollars.

4 steps

each week: open Sruly's note, drop in the episode, paste the captions, press Publish.

Lessons

01 **Plan before you build.** Spell out the whole vision, ask for a plan, answer its questions, then start.

02 **Keep one source of truth.** The Title Library holds every title, date and parsha. Everything else is generated from it.

03 **Start with the tool you already use.** At launch, Vimeo was both the upload step and the admin panel. When I outgrew it, I built my own front door and kept Vimeo for what it does best.

04 **Iterate on the real thing, locally first.** See every change on your own screen before it goes live.

05 **Test with real data.** Hold something back and prove the automation works.

06 **Check the boring facts.** Most problems are simple once you look.

07 **Speed is a design choice.** A beautiful page that loads slowly feels broken.

08 **Let AI handle the tedious middle; keep the judgment calls human.**

09 **Think ahead once, so nobody has to think about it again.** The calendar, the spelling safety net and the Yom Tov rows run for 50 years on their own.

10 **Launch at 99%. Don't wait for perfect.** The site went live with things still to discover, and that was right. Some of the best fixes came after launch: the Yom Tov rows, the spelling safety net, the Yom Tov that starts right after Shabbos, which I only noticed while reading this guide, and the transcript cleanup, which the first real weekly upload exposed. A fresh site will always have a few rough edges. Ship it, keep your eyes open, and fix as you go.

11 **Calm beats complete.** My first studio had everything and felt overwhelming. The one that works shows this week and folds everything else away.

12 **Design by trying, not by describing.** A panel of live choices on the real screen settled in minutes what option sheets couldn't.

13 **Build around the conversation that already happens.** The mailbox didn't change what Sruly sends me. It gave his weekly message a home, and the upload a memory.

14 **Leave a trail.** The build log means the next fix takes minutes.

Next up: a start-to-finish guide to how each episode is made and published, from the edit to the upload. Sign up for The Cutting Corner newsletter to get it when it's ready.

The vision was mine in 2022.
AI just caught up.

The design, the decisions and the director's chair never left me. What changed is that the engineering stopped being the wall. Plan it, describe it, check it, and ship it.

Built from the edit.

Avraham Kohn · The Cutting Corner