

After attending Aish's seminary in Jerusalem, she embarked on a journey home to Judaism – and is now running on Aish Ha'am's World Zionist Congress slate.

Ellie Zeiler was living the high life. At just 17 years old, the social media sensation – who has millions of followers on Tik Tok and Instagram – was living in Los Angeles, going to exciting events and following her dreams. She was young, popular, and successful and had everything she could have ever wanted... or so she thought.

"I was at a point where I could barely turn off my phone for an hour," she said. "Every morning, I'd wake up with so much anxiety when I checked my phone. I realized that the connection we think we have on social media is fake. It wasn't a real connection. My days were revolving around me and my looks and makeup and surface level things."

Ellie had a gut feeling that she was missing out on meaning – and she knew where to find it.

"I always knew there was something more to life, and it had to do with Judaism," she said.

The San Diego native grew up in a Reform Jewish home, attended Hebrew school, and loved Israel.

"I was always very proud to be Jewish," she said. "But I didn't know the textbook rules of Judaism."

After October 7, one of Ellie's friends in LA told Ellie she was going to Israel to learn about Judaism. Something clicked in Ellie's head.

"I decided I wanted to go too," she said. "I'll never forget calling my mom and telling her, 'Mom, I'm going to learn to be a better person.' She said, 'That sounds great.'"

What Ellie discovered at her seminary, Aish's Aspire program in Jerusalem, was eye-opening.

A Journey of Meaning

Ellie, who is now running as a World Zionist Congress delegate on the Aish Ha'Am slate, took in as much learning as she could at Aish.

"They taught me such beautiful concepts that I use daily," she said. "A lot of them had to do with being a good person and being good to others."

The content creator and influencer started posting videos and pictures of herself praying from a siddur, visiting the Kotel, and lighting candles for Shabbat. One post read, "My *neshama* (soul) loved 2024."

Ellie said, "I'm showing people how to live the everyday life of a committed Jew. I'm trying to do more every single day, because there isn't an on and off switch. I'm showing that you can be modest and fashionable while keeping Shabbat, have an amazing friends group, and go out on Saturday night. I show how I'm living a religious life that is much more grounded and happy, with fewer of the pressures that society is putting on us right now."

What truly resonated with Ellie was keeping Shabbat for the first time. "I turned off my phone, and for the first hour, I was anxious," she said. "I thought, 'What if my mom calls me?' Then, I had this feeling that if I'm making God happy, there is no way something is going to go wrong, so I should just surrender to it. It was amazing."

That Shabbat, she rested, ate, played games, and hung out with friends.

"When I turned my phone back on after Shabbat, I had this sense that it was no longer in control of me," she said. "Shabbat saved me."

Running on the Aish Ha'Am Slate

Ellie, who won an award from Aish for her advocacy, is now running on their World Zionist Congress slate.

"I am the biggest advocate for Aish," she said. "Everything they stand for I stand for as well. The slate has such incredible and diverse people of all ages and backgrounds."

If Ellie is elected, she will use her platform to protect young Jews on college campuses. She recently spoke with Jewish sorority members at the University of Texas at Austin who are experiencing antisemitism, and she wants to help them and others.

"They told me they thought their job was going to be to plan parties and make new friends," Ellie said. "Now they live three houses down from another house with a 'Free Palestine' sign, and they have to hire a security guard because people are threatening them."

When it comes to advice for her peer group, Ellie advises being proud of their Jewish identity and focusing on bettering themselves, just like she is doing.

"If you are curious about connecting with your religion, go ahead and do it in small steps," she said. "Try and turn off your phone on Shabbat. Read a Jewish book. Do some mitzvahs. I promise you, once you start following the Torah, your soul will light up. You'll feel so good."