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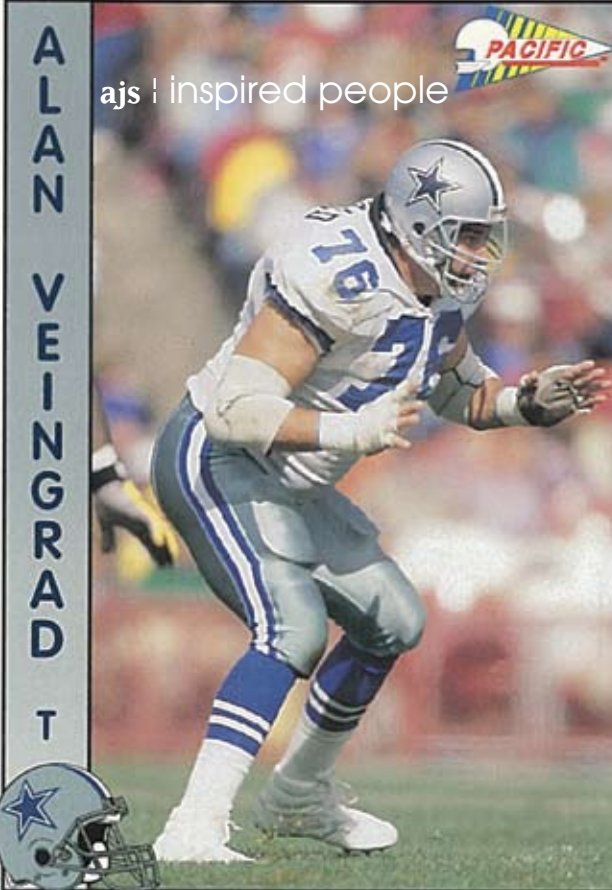
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# ALAN "SHLOMO" VEINGRAD – SUPER BOWL CHAMP TACKLES TORAH AND MITZVOT

An interview with Alan Veingrad, winner of a Super Bowl ring and now known as Shlomo - an observant Jew.

by  
Robin Davina Meyerson

Alan Veingrad spent seven seasons in the NFL as an offensive lineman, playing for the Green Bay Packers (1986-90) and then the Dallas Cowboys (1991-92), where he won a Super Bowl ring. Veingrad spent his years in Dallas protecting Troy Aikman and blocking for Emmitt Smith (who gave him a Rolex watch for helping him win the NFL rushing title).

Though he always considered himself Jewish, Veingrad didn't really embrace Judaism until after he left professional sports.

**RM: How long have you been interested in Judaism and Torah? Something must have grabbed your attention - what was it?**

SV: I started learning Torah in 1995 and it's been about 5 or 6 years that I have really been shomer shabbos and focused on learning Torah. I'm 46 years old and, though I was born in Brooklyn, we left for Miami when I was 3 years old. Growing up in Miami, I never saw a religious Jew in my life.

Before I was exposed to Judaism, I never knew about all the inspirational messages in the Torah. As an athlete, I listened to motivational tapes about inspiration, motivation, about being positive. I thought Judaism focused a lot on family and holidays and getting together. I didn't know much about the spirituality. I thought Judaism was all history. I didn't know about the different holidays and what they mean until I started to learn and realized it is the most inspirational thing ever. It's all about inspiration. Every holiday and every Shabbat there's so much inspiration.

Now as an adult and starting to understand that Judaism is so focused on the positive in life, I said sign me up. The Torah is mine as a Jew. I want to know about it.

**RM: How did you come to discover this new dimension to Judaism?**

SV: I went to a cousin's house for a traditional Friday night dinner. Out of the blue, he asked me 'Would you go to a Torah class?' So I went to my first Torah class a week later. During the first 59 ½ minutes of the one hour class, I just looked around the house, which belonged to a very wealthy doctor in south Florida - the chandeliers and the beauty of this house and the pool behind this house and the lake - thinking about the party I would have in this house if I owned this house.



When it came to the last 30 seconds of the class, the rabbi looked right at me, and he talked about materialism, and he talked about jealousy, and he talked about if you allow yourself you can become consumed with materialistic items. The rabbi talked about how it is the Torah that provides purpose and real meaning in life and how life can be lacking without Torah and then the rabbi stopped the class and my mouth was wide open. I looked at the rabbi and I thought he knew exactly what I was thinking.

I went to the rabbi afterward and said, 'Rabbi, I really need to know a lot more about what you're talking about. I don't have any books on the Torah.' He said, 'Come back next week. I'll bring you your first Torah book.'

When I started to understand that Judaism is so focused on the positive in life, I said sign me up. The Torah is mine as a Jew. I want to know about it.

**RM: How long now has it been since you starting keeping kosher and is there any food you miss?**

SV: It's been about 5 to 6 years now. I miss the pancakes at this great little restaurant in Colorado – but no one can recreate those pancakes – it was the Colorado altitude. Though in all seriousness, if you are passionate about something it doesn't matter about the pancakes. I am passionate about being kosher so it's easy. I am passionate about learning. I am passionate about *Shabbos*. I apply the same passion that I had for football to my Judaism. Kosher, *Shabbos* and Judaism is not part time for me – it's full time. It's not something you can turn on or off. I'm passionate about it.

"I miss when you played football, but you know – I am prouder of you with your yarmulke on than I ever was when you had on a helmet." – Alan's Dad

**RM: How have your family members reacted to your new passion?**

SV: You have to remember I was a football player and all my family were huge fans. My big brother is a police officer who has a shrine in his house to all my football stuff. It was traumatic for him, when I became Torah observant. You know – just imagine two brothers going out for a beer and now I've taken a different role in life. Yet his pride in his Judaism has just swelled after seeing his little brother change.

My mom comes for Shabbat and holidays. She has always wanted more *yiddishkeit* in her life. For my dad though it was hard. He was so proud of his son the football player. He used to go to a sports bar every Sunday and record all my football games – he made tapes of every game I played It took him a

## Now "Playing" at a Synagogue — or Boardroom — Near You



### Shlomo Shares His Lessons as a Professional Speaker, Motivator and Entertainer

Alan "Shlomo" Veingrad, Offensive Lineman, shares his story of being the only Jewish player on the Super Bowl Champion Dallas

Cowboy Team in 1992. With remarkable candor and alacrity, Shlomo keeps his audiences spellbound with his accounts of the intense training, ruthless competitive atmosphere, and performance requirements of professional football life. He relays his personal breakthroughs and accomplishments during his five years with the Green Bay Packers and two years with the Dallas Cowboys playing for legendary coach Jimmy Johnson alongside hall of fame quarterback Troy Aikman and record-breaking running back Emmitt Smith.

In his one-of-a-kind presentations Shlomo vividly relates the discipline of being a professional athlete and leader of high-performance sales teams to the process of becoming an observant Jew.

He lived the glamorous life of a retired NFL player. He loved the attention, the fast pace, the invitations, and the fascinating people... But he was increasingly aware of a blankness in his heart and an emptiness in his soul. As Shlomo reacquainted himself with the teachings, values, and practices of Jewish life he began to get a glimpse of what was missing. In perhaps his most powerful and very personal presentation, Shlomo shares the steps that have led to his own spiritual journey where he has found a deepening sense of contentment and a renewed sense of purpose.

Visit [AlanVeingrad.com](http://AlanVeingrad.com) or email [Alan@AlanVeingrad.com](mailto:Alan@AlanVeingrad.com).

while to get over it. I started asking my dad to come to shul with me but he said no. "That's your life — not mine. That's what you do."

We'd get together and one time he came to dinner on Rosh Hashanah with the community at shul. And he really enjoyed himself immensely. He came another time when we sponsored Kiddush for my son. My dad died about 4 years ago and before he died he said to me, "I miss when you played football, but you know — I am prouder of you with your yarmulke on than I ever was when you had on a helmet."

In Pat Riley's book *Winner*, he talks about planting your feet or you'll get run over. It's the same thing in Judaism.

**AJS: What about your wife? Has she been learning Torah too?**

SV: My wife and I are on the same page. We grew together. We decided to pull our kids from public school and put them in day school. Our kids are now 14, 12, and 10 and for them Judaism is a party! They are so happy! Every Friday and Saturday it's a major party. We're loaded with candy and good times. Our kids grew with us. Sure, they remember Cheesecake Factory and going to a Saturday matinee movie — but they never wanted to go back. One time, my oldest daughter was asked by her grandmother if she wanted to go back to the old times. She just said "no, I don't."

**ALAN VEINGRAD • T • 73**

**PACKERS**

After sitting out 1988 season with career-threatening hip injury, returned to lineup last year and held off challenge of Packers' top draft choice, Tony Mandarich, to start all 16 games at right tackle...Started all 16 games as rookie free agent in 1986, then made 11 starts in strike-shortened 1987 season...Didn't play in 1988, had surgery in offseason, and completed rehabilitation process in time for 1989 opener...Particularly adept at pass blocking...East Texas State graduate had tryouts with Buccaneers and Oilers in 1985 before signing with Packers one year later.

Born: Brooklyn  
Birthdate: 7/24/63  
HT: 6-5 WT: 277

College: East Texas State  
NFL Exp: 4th year  
Free agent, '88

Official Photo and Stat Card of the NFL.  
© 1990 National Football League. **502**

**ALAN VEINGRAD**  
**Tackle**

HT: 6'5" WT: 277 Born: 7/24/63  
College: East Texas State NFL Exp: 6th year  
Alan plays tight end in short yardage situations.

**DID YOU KNOW?**  
Veingrad earned National Strength and Conditioning All-America honors at East Texas State!

A former starting tackle for the Green Bay Packers, Dallas signed Veingrad to add experience to the offensive line. In his first season for Dallas he played both guard positions, tackle and tight end.

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**RM: What is the toughest part of observance for you?**

SV: You know I'll tell you one example. I was working for a company for a few years and then left and wanted to go back and do some consulting. So I show up to the company and walk in to the CEOs office and now I have a big beard

time, it's mushy – finally on the third time it's golden brown! So with these types of experiences you get through the challenges and it gets easier.

When I started keeping *Shabbos*, I had on the calendar a few friends' birthday parties on *Shabbos*. That was tough – what was I going to do? Keep *Shabbos* one week and not the next? No. In Pat Riley's book, *Winner* he talks about planting your feet or you'll get run over. It's the same thing in Judaism. In tennis, for example, if you're either at the net or at the back of the court you'll be ok – but if you are stuck in the center of the court you're a goner.

I am passionate about learning. I am passionate about Shabbos.  
I apply the same passion that I had for football to my Judaism.

and tzizis and a kippah – so they are all looking at me really like they don't know what to say. So that's a challenge – but it's more like an uncomfortable feeling and you get over it. Other times, I'll run into an old friend from high school and it's the same kind of thing. But you know it's like making waffles! You buy a waffle maker and the first time you make it, you burn it. The second

I went from zero to 60 really fast in Judaism and a lot of people say take baby steps or else you'll crash and burn. But the passion is still there. I asked many people – when does the passion calm down? Well it never does! As long as you keep exploring Torah and learning and growing – the Torah flames are fully lit. But when you are in the middle of the court and not passionate and stop growing well it just doesn't work so well.

**RM: What do you miss most about your football days?**

SV: You know all football players miss being with 50 men and having the camaraderie of being in the locker room and working on a team to win a game, but I don't miss that because I have camaraderie of my Jewish community. Whenever I go to a new community, my family is hosted by the community and it is so warm. They embrace you and love you.

I do miss that rush of my name being called and running through the tunnel – you can't get that anywhere in the world and all retired football players feel that. But you know what? When someone says to me "I've been struggling with wearing a kippah outside of shul, and now after hearing you speak, I'm going to really try and do it" that feeling is immeasurable. It keeps me getting on a plane to tell my story.

