When I was a child, there was a family hour on television during which America’s parents knew their children could join them and not see anything they deemed inappropriate. Today, at most any hour on television, children can see a wide array of violations of the values of the seventh and several other commandments.

During the 1990s, all this went over a tipping point, and parents in Connecticut began to complain to me, their Senator, that they felt as if they were in competition with the entertainment culture to raise their children. And they were losing.

I agreed with them, but I also believed that America’s Constitution and laws guaranteed freedom of expression and promised a limited role for government in the private lives of the American people, so it was hard to legislate this threat away.

But I had my voice and what might be called the Senate pulpit from which to speak. I joined with like-minded Democrats and Republicans in arguing that the entertainment culture was having a bad effect on the values of our children and therefore on our country. We called on the entertainment industry to self-regulate to protect our children. We introduced legislation that would compel the entertainment industry to adopt better rating codes. The Seventh Commandment was never explicitly mentioned in the advocacy or our legislative proposals, but its values were definitely under attack by the entertainment industry, and we and a lot of America’s parents were fighting back.

Then, in the summer of 1998, it became clear that President Clinton had been involved in a sexual relationship with a White House intern named Monica Lewinsky. I was an early and strong supporter of Bill Clinton’s and proud of all that he was accomplishing as President, so his offensive behavior was truly heartbreaking to me.

Surely, President Clinton’s conduct had disrespected his wife and undermined the sanctity of their marriage. But it was private behavior, wasn’t it? And didn’t he continue to receive high approval ratings in public opinion polls for the job he was doing as President?

In the end, I decided I had to speak out because there is no such thing as private conduct when you are President. Everything you do will probably become public, and because you are the most powerful person in the country, whatever you do will influence behavior throughout the country. That is even more true today in the age of social media, but it is a lesson that can be learned from history as well – including Biblical history.

In the Bible, the higher you go, the more demanding the standard to which your behavior is held, because of the greater impact your behavior, good or bad, has on your people. Perhaps that is the reason the Kings of Israel were commanded to have their own Torah Scroll, which they were to carry with them at all times. The King was not the last word. The Torah was.

King Saul lost his kingship because he failed to fully carry out the stern instructions G-d gave him through the prophet Samuel about the eradication of the Amalekites. In powerful and poignant words, Samuel chastised Saul: “Though you be little in your own sight, are you not head of the Tribes of Israel?... Wherefore, then, did you not hearken to the voice of the L-rd?”

I called on the President to accept full responsibility for what he had done and to apologize to the country. Whether it seemed fair or not, presidents did not have a right to privacy because their private behavior, once publicized, has enormous societal consequences. That loss of privacy is one of the costs that comes with all the opportunities and benefits of occupying America’s most powerful position.

A week later, the President convened an interfaith gathering of clergy in the White House, at which he movingly took responsibility for his actions, and asked for forgiveness.

Ultimately, President Clinton, like all of us, will be judged by a hopefully merciful G-d, but in the meantime, each of us must continue to strive to realize in our lives the values of the Ten Commandments, including the Seventh.