

Exodus 19:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Moses said unto the LORD, The people cannot come up to mount Sinai: for thou chargedst us, saying, Set bounds about the mount, and sanctify it.

Analysis

And Moses said unto the LORD, The people cannot come up to mount Sinai: for thou chargedst us, saying, Set bounds about the mount, and sanctify it.

Moses respectfully reminds God of His own command—modeling faithful leadership that implements divine directives. The phrase 'cannot come up' (לֹא יָקַל, lo yukhelu) means 'are unable'—not defiant refusal but appropriate restraint. Moses essentially says 'We've followed Your instructions; the boundaries are set.' This shows Moses as neither presumptuous (acting without orders) nor negligent (ignoring commands). The double imperative 'set bounds and sanctify' (הַגְּבֵל וְקָדְשֵׁה, hagbel vequddashto) recalls Moses' faithful execution of God's will. This exchange reveals God's purpose: not providing new information but reinforcing crucial warnings. The repetition underscores life-or-death importance.

Historical Context

Moses' response demonstrates the prophetic role—speaking both to people on God's behalf and to God on people's behalf. His reminder to God is not irreverent but reflects covenant dialogue between LORD and mediator.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. What does Moses' reminder to God about His own commands teach about faithful leadership?
2. Why does God repeat warnings that have already been given and obeyed?

Interlinear Text

לֹא	לֹא	יְהִי	ה	אֶל	מֹשֶׁה	לִאמְרָה	בְּעֵמָה	לְעֵלָת
said	And Moses	H413	unto the LORD	H3808	cannot	The people	come up	
H559	H4872		H3068		H3201	H5971		H5927

אָל	רְבָּעָה	סִינֵּי	פִּ	אַתָּה	פָּעַד תָּה	בְּנֵי
H413	about the mount	Sinai	H3588	H859	for thou chargedst	H0

רָאָמֵן	לִקְדָּשָׁתָו:	רָאָמֵן	רָאָמֵן	רָאָמֵן
said	Set bounds	H853	about the mount	and sanctify
H559	H1379		H2022	H6942

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 19:12 (Parallel theme): And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death: