

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 יֵאָחֵז, 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' (הַגְבֵּל וְקִדְּשָׁתוּ, 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

לֵאמֹר	מֹשֶׁה	אֶל	יְהוָה	לֹא	יֻכַּל	הָעָם	לָעֹלָת
said	And Moses	H413	unto the LORD	H3808	cannot	The people	come up
H559	H4872		H3068		H3201	H5971	H5927
אֶל	הָהָר	סִינַי	כִּי	אָתָּה	הָעֵדָתָה	נָוֹ	
H413	about the mount	Sinai	H3588	H859	for thou chargedst	H0	
	H2022	H5514			H5749		
לֵאמֹר	הַגִּבְלִים	אֶת	הָהָר	וְקִדְשָׁתוּ:			
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: