the request was made now, rather than earlier. Although it is not explicitly
stated, it would seem quite certain that he accepted Moses' invitation, since we
find his descendants in Canaan at a later time (Jdg.i.16, iv.11).

   c. The ark and the blessing (x.33-36)

   The mount of the Lord (33). This is the only time this exact phrase is used, but
the same place (Mt. Horeb) is called 'the mount of God' in Ex.iii.1,iv.27, xviii.5,
xxiv.13; 1 Ki.xix.8. The latter part of verse 33 has been much discussed, most
critics insisting that it means that the arkof the covenant went a three days'
journey ahead of the people in order to search out a resting place for them. Some
critics say that this means that the ark moved of itself. Others say that it
was probably carried in a wagon by oxen. An excessive literalness can reduce
any book to nonsense. The phrase the ark...went need not mean that it moved of
itself, but can perfectly well refer to its being carried on the shoulders of
priests and Levites in the normal way. Morever, there is no grammatical necessity
of interpreting the phrase 'three days' journey' as some critics take it. The AV
renders it in three days' journey.   qWhile this involves a measure of interpretation,
it is consistent with the context, and entirely possible grammatically. The
critical interpretation involves the conclusion that the clause is a bit of mythology
inconsistent with the rest of the book of Numbers. Such a conclusion is entirely
unnecessary.

   Yet there is an apparent contradictioin between this statement and the previous
instructions for transporting the tabernacle and its vessels in the midst of the
host (ii.17,iv.15). There are two possible explanations. One is the result of
close examination of the phrase before them (33), Heb. lipheneihem, which may simply
mean 'in their presence,' as in Dt. iii.28,x.11, and xxxi.3. In these passages
Joshua or Moses is said to go before the people under circumstances which clearly
indicate that they were not physically in front of them, but before them in the