

**CANTOR BENJAMIN MAISSNER**  
**SABBATICAL NOTES**

Sunday, February 12, 2006

Dear Friends,

As we continue travelling deeper into Vietnam we come about places, experiences and insights that previously we could have only imagined.

Dare the unknown and you will find a world beyond the ability to describe. In the city of Hue, where we spent three days, we took an entire day-long group motorbike tour into the rural inland and saw the most interesting and unforgettable sights. Pastures, cattle, villages, shacks and river banks where people still wash their clothes and fisherman fish while the children are playing next to them; roads the width of city sidewalks and clean beautiful spots of nature in embryonic stages. The joy on the faces of people welcoming us into their villages and trying, of course, to sell some drinks and whatever earns them a Dong (local currency) to feed their family.

The most incredible moments were in a Buddhist monastery where we enjoyed a vegetarian lunch the likes of which you have never ever tasted. These monks cannot eat meat and made us the most unbelievable feast. We then sat down and rested and did some meditation along with our hosts. I saw all of this experience with the image of SHIVITY HASHEM LENEGDI TAMID, the image of HASHEM in front of my eyes and realized how each religion has parallel features and qualities that mirror human nature. I will never forget those moments in the silence spent; we ought to learn about reflection and meditation from others, as it will help our own worship and communication with HASHEM.

The days in Hoi have been equally exciting. It is the period of the fourteen days of the lunar calendar and the song festival is in full swing. The evenings have been filled with light in this city of tourist loving people.

Recently, Vietnam opened its doors to the West and is welcoming every opportunity to share in the spoils of modernity. Hoi is full of French colonial flavour illustrated in its breathtaking architecture. It has also been proclaimed a "heritage site" by the United Nations and as a result many tourists are present here all the time to the delight of the locals. In its history the city was the country's first port and its variety of food, dress and fashion reflects this fact. It is also the only community where Chinese and Vietnamese live in harmony.

Believe it or not, I also rented a motorbike and am biking around with these crazy drivers. Of course, I'm all too familiar with Israeli drivers, so it's not too bad.

Until later I am, yours

*Beny*