

Tuesday, February 7, 2006

## BARUCH OSEH BERESHIT

I cannot even begin to describe to you my experience on the calmest spot on earth, Hanoi Bay in North Vietnam. The cool waters, the pictorial rocks soaring out of the waters and the legends accompanying the story of dragons spitting pearls and creating more than three thousand mountains in the sea. On the prow of the overnight boat we boarded, I found myself davening Mincha, uttering the words of Ashrey without having control over my tongue as I proclaimed these words of awe and amazement. Here one can really pray and wonder how and who created it all and how insignificant we all are, especially in this country of 80 million hard-working people who grow rice in endless fields beyond the farthest horizons imaginable. I have been reading about this culture and its history and been amazed at the power and will of a people to recreate its future: all of the above with an eye to Zion and our parallel quest to survive. I am not comparing the fate of our people to the Vietnamese. Listening to ancient history of blood and conquest for over 4000 thousand years and its final blow with the last war which devastated this country and shook the world over, one must look upon it with different eyes.

After relaxing in the beauty of the Halong Bay, we made our way to Hanoi, the cradle of communist Vietnam. Visiting the Revolutionary Museum and tracing the long history of freedom fighting makes one wonder if this socialist system is so bad for its people. Who am I to pass judgement on the war which was never declared on Vietnam by the USA. After all, I am an Israeli who had the fortune to live a good life in the USA. The Museum, to my mind, describes the events that have taken place in a very objective story and is documented fairly accurately on all its aspects. Hanoi itself is dirty and noisy and one has to be here to witness it, but I am glad to leave the wall-to-wall people.

More to come as we travel southwards into the costal plains of Vietnam

Grateful as ever, I am yours,

*Beny*