

**LAUDATIO IN HONOUR OF MRS RUTH WEISS BY THE AMBASSADOR OF SOUTH AFRICA TO THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY, MR STONE SIZANI, ON THE OCCASION OF A ROSE PLANTING EVENT AT THE SOUTH AFRICAN EMBASSY, BERLIN, 24 MARCH 2022**

[presented by his representative Counsellor Ms. Laura Joyce; reference to spoken word]

Ladies and gentlemen

According to the Royal Horticultural Society in Britain, the properties of the Rosa Persica, which includes the Rose of Sheba, are the following:

- They flourish in fully exposed areas and are drought resistant.
- They do best when they face south.
- They are generally pest-free.

As for the spiritual symbolism of roses, according to the Penguin Dictionary of Symbols, they denote the "*attainment of perfection, unsullied fulfilment...The chalice of life, the soul, the heart and love*".

In Christianity, the rose has many connotations with Christ, his mother Mary, the Cross and resurrection. In Islam, the rose garden is one of contemplation. In the Old Testament, King Solomon, in the Song of Solomon, talks about the Rose of Sharon. In Ecclesiatics 24 verse 14, we read: "*I was exalted...as a rose-plant in Jericho, as a fair olive tree in a pleasant field*". In Greek mythology, the rose is also associated with rebirth. And perhaps most of all, roses are a symbol of love and sacrifice.

The colours of roses also have significance. Red roses are said to represent passion and yellow roses wisdom and joy.

The Queen of Sheba Rose is a combination of both.

Ladies and gentlemen

I believe you will agree that the character, personified by Mrs Ruth Weiss' long life, exemplifies all the characteristics of the rose as I have described to you above, and more particularly, of the specific rose tree we shall be planting today in her honour, the Rose of Sheba.

With her passion, wisdom and joy of life, she came as a refugee to South Africa and took root there. She emulated the courage and steadfastness of Ruth of the Bible, who told her mother-in-law Naomi: "*Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me.*"

While all of this may not be the case literally, spiritually and in terms of her life's output, yes, in her **MENSCHLICHKEIT**, Ruth Weiss is a second Ruth of the Bible.

There is an equivalent African saying written by Allesane Ndaw of Senegal that expresses Ruth Weiss' South African (and African) journey. It goes like this:

*“To know something is to be in union with it, to be within it, to approach it internally.*

*Remaining on the outside, you can never know something in its essence.*

*To know things, you have not to dissect them but rather to link them with something else.”*

Ladies and gentlemen,

Ruth Weiss did not come to South Africa to remain an outsider. She became one of us, the oppressed. And such she remains, until today.

I selected this saying by the Senegalese writer because Senegal is the place where one of the most important interactions between black exiles and white South Africans took place in July 1987 and which eventually led to a peaceful political settlement.

If people like Ruth Weiss had not immersed themselves in the fate of the black people of South Africa; if people like her did not link their own lives with those of the oppressed; and if experiences of discrimination that Mrs Weiss suffered in her youth in Germany did not find a connection for her in her new homeland, then South Africa would have been doomed.

But Ruth Weiss **DID** make the connections, she **DID** make huge sacrifices.

Like a tree she grew deep roots in South Africa with branches that reached all over the world.

For **THAT**, we honour her today.

And for **THAT** we declare her one of the Righteous Among the Nations of South Africa, a true Queen of Sheba.

I thank you.