

Among this summer's clutch of bloc-buster, comic-based, hero movies is, "Captain America: The First Avenger." It may not get the leading man or woman an Oscar next year, but I love this sort of stuff - although I'm quite happy to accept that there are two or three people around whose boats do not float in this sea of special effects, loud bangs and big punch-ups.

Most people see Captain America (aka "Cap") as the epitome of patriotic fervour, invented as he was, just months before Pearl Harbour. Which doesn't account for the global appeal this figure has had since then. I think there is something subconscious going on: people want a champion to pick up where they can no longer prevail.

Jack Kirby and Joe Simon, Cap's creators, were (as were so many in that industry) Jewish. They were nurtured with the legacy of a people whose fabric was woven with proto-heroes: Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Samson, Elijah, David, Judith (who assassinated general Holofernes - not the girl in the Life of Brian!), just to mention the more obvious ones. And just like the Bible, reflecting life in any age, there are constants. The heroes are dedicated to save their people. They - with or without super-powers - have vulnerabilities, failure, doubt, times when they disappoint, a seemingly overwhelming enemy, but of course, the final victory.

It is fiction indeed that Captain America is the personification of the quest for human perfection, although that is part of the plot line. The quest is nonetheless very real, as is the need to know that we can overcome the corruption of mortality. (That's called hope; *vide* last month's article.)

Again, I reckon Kirby and Simon probably were working through their subconscious: after all, the greatest of all the Jewish heroes came to save his people - and did. Yeshua ben Yousef, alias, "God Man." Call upon this hero and you will be saved. And, in time, perfected.

Go on, take yourself off to the movies and see how many parallels with God's rescue of his people you can count. It could be a religious experience! (No, ladies - the overdeveloped "pecs" are not what I'm talking about...)