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## One Night With The King [2006, Movie]

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### One Night With The King: Review



★★★★

Produced by the son of Trinity Broadcasting Network founder Paul Crouch, this historical epic offers a solid two hours of spectacle and intrigue drawn from The Book of Esther by way of Tommy Tenney and Mark Andrew Olsen's novel *Hadassah*. Susa, Persia, 4th century BC: Orphaned Hadassah (Tiffany Dupont) has been raised by her uncle Mordecai (John Rhys-Davies), a Jewish scribe to the court of King Xerxes (Brit-rocker Luke Goss), to be a pious, faithful woman. Though Persia has a significant Jewish population, they live

there at the whim of the king and are always vulnerable. Persia is on the brink of war with Greece, and during a lavish banquet meant to exalt Xerxes' wealth and beneficence, the king is publicly offended by his wife, Queen Vashti (Jyoti Dogra). He divorces her and orders young women from throughout his kingdom gathered as potential queens, Hadassah among them. On her uncle's advice, she changes her name to Esther to disguise her Jewishness. Esther befriends court eunuch Hegai (Tiny Lister), who helps maneuver her into Xerxes' path, and the king is impressed by her beauty, intelligence and spirit. She becomes queen, but is plunged into a nest of court intrigue. While Prince Memucan (Omar Sharif), who served Xerxes' father, offers wise and moderate counsel, Prince Admantha (John Noble) is plotting to snatch the crown for himself. Admantha is in cahoots with head guard Haman (James Callis), but Haman has his own agenda: A descendent of the Agakite people slaughtered by ancient Jewish king Saul on the advice of Samuel the Prophet (a wild-eyed Peter O'Toole), he wants to see the Jewish people exterminated. As Xerxes prepares for war against the Greeks, who killed his father, Haman rises through the ranks by deceit and betrayal, and is eventually named a prince. When he makes clear his intention to have Persia's Jews killed, Esther must risk her own life to save her people. Despite some odd twists, notably the suggestion that Haman's real beef with both the Greeks and the Jews is their shared democratic conviction that all men are born equal, this looks a lot like a classic Hollywood Biblical spectacular, from elephants to exotic beauties draped in jewels. The cast is uneven but never amateurish — Goss may not be much of an actor, but he looks terrific in various states of royal undress; much the same could be said of Yul Brynner — and the production values are consistently high. --Maitland McDonagh

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