The impurities of Gentiles and errant Jews were regularly equated with seminal impurity and niddah (menstrual impurity or the menstruating woman herself) within certain kabbalistic texts. Elliot Wolfson, Isaiah Tishby, Sharon Koren and others have already demonstrated that “the other nations,” or more generally, evil and divine punishment, were associated with impurity and the Left, feminine, sometimes demonic, side of the divinity within theosophic kabbalah. For some kabbalists,
just as the demonic feminine, like her divine feminine counterpart, could be reunited with the divine male, so too could some Gentiles either be redeemed or were characterized as somehow an integral part of the divine schema. Even in such seemingly conciliatory texts, however, Gentiles remained impure and spiritually inferior to Jews; their redemption lay in conversion or some other kind of purification by association with Judaism.² The human body, subject as it was to a variety of impurities, remained the fundamental source of symbolic imagery to portray impurity/evil within the Godhead itself, in human-divine relations, and in human-human hierarchies. Yet not all impurities held the same connotations, nor were all Gentiles alike. In this essay I explore the nuances of gendered impurity in polemic against Christians, Muslims, and “bad” Jews in a variety of thirteenth-century Iberian kabbalists’ writings that span both the ecstatic and theosophic approaches.³ I will focus on Abraham Abulafia (1240–c. post 1291), the primary exemplar of “ecstatic kabbalah,” the Žohar, a multi-layered Jewish mystical text of the thirteenth century that became the foundation for future theosophic kabbalistic works, and Joseph Gikatilla (1248–c. 1305), who was strongly

---
