

General Conclusion

In our concluding thoughts about the three lectures that have resulted in the present monograph, we are left, I believe, with only a few certainties, and with many more hypotheses and questions. The poorly attested testimonies about the early Jewish population in Eastern Europe offer us only a very partial glimpse of their intellectual activity or their cultural tradition. The only traces remaining are the translations from Hebrew into the local Slavic vernacular that make up the pieces of the historical puzzle I have been trying to assemble here. The cultural impact of the pre-Ashkenazic Jews of Eastern Europe may not have been very significant within Judaism itself. In fact, whatever intellectual achievements there may have existed, were completely obliterated with and by the arrival of the Ashkenazic Jews. The only noticeable impact seems to have been the external one—namely, that of the effort apparently directed at their Christian neighbors, an effort that may not have achieved its purportedly desired results, but has left a strong impression in Russian, Belarusian, and Ukrainian memory, an impression lasting to this day.