Yevgenia Kozak 's Grandfather Gershko Shafer

My paternal grandfather Gershko Shafer. This photo was taken in Bershad in 1916. My maternal and paternal ancestors came from Bershad, a Jewish town in Vinnitsa province. Bershad was a bigger Jewish town: its population in the early 1920s was over 6 thousand Jews. Jews lived in small houses closely adjusting to one another in the central part of the town: there was no place for gardens available. There were cobblestone streets with cunettes on both sides of streets and bridges over them to each house. In spring they were filled with rain water and melting snow flowing into the Dohna River surrounding the town on three sides. Jewish men were craftsmen: tailors, shoemakers, potters, glass cutters. They earned their living to the best they could. They spoke Yiddish (and so did we in the family), but they all knew Ukrainian, as well as Ukrainians spoke Yiddish. There was Pyatkovka village across the river where Ukrainians lived, and there was also a 'katsap' street in the town. Katsap was a jargon word for Russians. Residents of the town got along well and had good neighborly relationships. Jews attended a beautiful synagogue near the market in the center of the town. There were several smaller synagogues in the town. Ukrainians and Russians went to a big church over the river. My grandparents died before I was born. All I know is that they were born to big Jewish families in Bershad, traditionally religious and observing all traditions. I believe my both grandfathers were raised Jewish: they studied in the cheder, but this was all education they got. My father's father Gershko Shafer, born in Bershad in the 1860s, was a leather tanner. He worked very hard steeping, handling and drying leather, but he earned well, and his family was better off than the family of my grandfather Shloime-Yoina Mitzel.