

TIMELINE: NILI

1915 In the spring of 1915, Aaron Aaronsohn, a famous agronomist living in Palestine, hatches a plan to help the British conquer Palestine from the Turks.

1916 Aaronsohn leaves for England, disguising the reason for his trip so as not to alert the Ottoman authorities.

1917 On January 29th, Aaronsohn is dealt a bitter blow. He learns that his friend and deputy Avshalom Feinberg has been killed, shot by Bedouin while trying to cross the Sinai into Egypt.

1917 On January 31, the S.S. Monaghan makes its first successful mission to Athlit, Aaron Aaronsohn's scientific station. On this trip, Liova Schneierson, a friend of the Aaronsohn's, comes up with the name NILI – an acronym for Netzach Yisrael lo yeshaker (the eternity of Israel will not lie).

1917 Aaron puts his sister Sarah in charge of the spy network. Her deputy is Yosef Lishansky. Thirty full-time agents dot the country while Aaron stays in Cairo advising British HQ. The intelligence the NILI network provides dramatically increases the quality of British intelligence.

1917 On September 3, a carrier pigeon carrying a coded message from NILI's base in Athlit loses its way and lands in the home of a Turkish official. The Turks understand a spy ring exists.

1917 On September 17, Na'aman Belkind, an important NILI agent, is captured trying to make it across the Sinai to Egypt. Documents sewn into his clothes are discovered.

1917 On October 2, Turkish cavalry surround the town of Zichron Ya'akov. The Turks torture Sarah's father and then Sarah.

1917 On October 5, Sarah shoots herself so as not to give up information under torture. She lingers for a few days and dies on October 9.

1917 On October 20, Yosef Lishansky is the last member of Nili to be captured. He is hanged in Damascus on December 16.

1919 Aaron Aaronsohn dies in a plane accident while crossing the English Channel.

1967 On November 29th, Avshalom Feinberg's grave is discovered. He is reinterred on Mount Herzl with full military honors.