

## Wrath of the Righteous



# Deskari

**D**eskari, called the Lord of the Locust Host and Usher of the Apocalypse, rose from humble origins to become a great source of evil on Golarion. His "father," the demon lord Pazuzu, mated with an unnamed giant insectlike demon in the Abyss, and from this union Deskari was hatched, was born, or simply emerged into existence. Somewhat protected by Pazuzu's strong influence and sheltered by his Abyssal realm, Deskari was able to gather thousands of troops under his banner, found an insidious cult on the Material Plane, develop into a nascent demon lord, seize his own Abyssal realm, and elevate himself to full demon lord status.



## Deskari

Long before the Worldwound opened, the thin planar boundary between Deskari's realm and the land once known as Sarkoris allowed the demon lord to prey upon the mortal humans there, which put him into frequent conflict with the living god Aroden. Eventually, Aroden was able to defeat Deskari's avatar and drive many of his demons and cultists into the Lake of Mists and Veils. However, this was only a temporary setback for the demon lord—with the help of a powerful worshiper in Sarkoris, he was able to revive his cult there less than 200 years later and create many small portals into the city of Threshold. Upon Aroden's death in 4606 AR, Deskari's influence on Golarion ripened and burst, transforming Sarkoris into the demon-haunted Worldwound. This gave the demon lord a solid foothold on Golarion, and now he plays a patient game of corruption and advancement as his minions press the borders of their influence slowly forward until they can make Golarion the doorstep of the Abyss or fully drag it into the realm of chaos.

Despite his monstrous and inhuman appearance, Deskari is not a mere brute or a mindless thing like a common insect; such a creature would not be able to rise to the power of a demon lord, as it would inevitably be outwitted or enslaved by a creature of greater intelligence or magic. Rather, Deskari is a genius who has lived for thousands of years, and understands the nature of mortal fear, sins, and souls. And just as a hive is willing to sacrifice drones and soldiers to destroy a dangerous invader or expand its territory, Deskari is willing to spend the lives of his minions or even allow great losses if doing so helps him achieve victory in the long run.

One example of Deskari's intellect is his strategy for taking over Golarion through the Worldwound. He could have sent his armies surging over the land in massed waves to conquer the world, but such a purposeful act would have aroused great alarm in the celestial realms and been met with immediate resistance by the many good churches and other factions. Instead, the demonic leadership tested the waters with a disorganized wave of troops with murder and pillaging on their minds. These demons were eventually turned back, leaving the impression that the armies were a leaderless mass of frenzied fiends obviously unable to work together—a tide that, while dangerous, could be contained by walling it away.

Furthermore, some in that first wave actually teleported to various dark places in the world, stirring up deep-lairing monsters and luring mortals into sin. Deskari's

initial intent was that many more would do so during later waves, but the construction of the *wardstones* limited the use of teleportation. Fortunately, he had a secondary plan: giving those crusading against his armies time to defeat themselves by succumbing to corruption and unwittingly doing the demons' jobs for them. And despite being contained within the ruined land of Sarkoris, the demonic armies had plenty of targets to destroy and torment while they awaited the next big onslaught.

With the aid of Baphomet and his cult of Ivory Templars, the demons used this time to pick away at the mental fortitude of the crusaders, using disguised demons or hidden cultists to vex and stir contempt, and then let human nature do the rest. The crusaders have become shot through with corruption, treachery, and sin, weakening themselves with witch hunts, pillaging, and infighting over the best strategy for defeating the demons. Meanwhile, the reach of the Worldwound creeps outward every day—and the influence of the Abyss on mortals outpaces its physical presence in the world.

Deskari thinks of himself as superior to other demon lords, especially those who arose from humanoid creatures. His chitinous flesh is harder, his eyes are more numerous and more perceptive, and his saliva is a deadly poison. A child of two powerful

demons, he was never a mortal, and therefore was never a larval soul, so he deems his origin more pure—he was always a demon and never anything else, and thus he has always been superior to any demon lord who had a mortal life before becoming a demon. Likewise, he esteems other lords who predate mortal sin (including his father, Pazuzu) or who originated as *qliphoth* more than the once-mortal. He does not speak of this attitude, but it guides his plans and his interactions with his minions and peers.

Deskari hungers for power, territory, and the resources to feed his armies and monstrous brood. His eventual plans for total conquest might put him in opposition with other demon lords with similar interests, but the timeline for these endeavors is long enough that he expects to defeat them directly or to have infiltrated their realms with his own agents and destroyed them from within before they pose a significant threat.

Many of his demonic minions are mindless (or near mindless) creatures who obey him (or his generals) only because of his and his generals' special ability to communicate with vermin. These minions' mindlessness makes them dangerous to all other nearby creatures, and ensures these demonic vermin are impervious to bribery



DESKARI'S ABYSSAL MINIONS ARE LIKE VERMIN IN THE WORLD OF MORTALS. LIFT A PIECE OF WOOD, AND THEY ARE THERE. SPLIT A STONE, AND YOU WILL FIND THEM.

—THE BOOK OF THE DAMNED



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### The Rasping Rifts

Deskari's Abyssal realm, known as the Rasping Rifts, is a horrific maze of chasms and canyons infested with insectile monsters. In some places the walls and ledges are carpeted with so many crawling things that the tainted soil is buried under a thick layer of molted husks and particulate bug feces. In other places the skies—barely visible above the realm's steep walls—are permanently darkened by flying swarms the size of cities. Many regions constantly rumble and hiss with the noise of subterranean warrens built by demon-faced giant ants ready to burst outward and seize any intruder; others are flooded with floating pools of poisonous, stagnant water and home to house-sized Abyssal mosquitos that can drain a Medium creature dry in moments. Many of these areas are bottomless, eventually emptying into the realm of the qliphoth, but some contain ravines with semipermanent floors.

Giant vermin the size of warships are homes, nests, and transportation for voracious gangs of Deskari's minions, who goad their nearly invulnerable war-steeds forward with pain or offerings of food (usually larva or captured demons). Giant vermin, retrievers, swarms, riftcreepers (*Pathfinder Campaign Setting: The Worldwound* 57), vermleks (*Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Lords of Chaos, Book of the Damned, Vol. 2* 54), and derakni (*The Worldwound* 43) are the most common inhabitants. Many of these creatures carry strange diseases native to the Abyss, and infect opponents with every physical attack.

The strange hive-cities of the Rasping Rifts cover the canyon floors and extend upward along the cliff faces, as most inhabitants can fly or at least climb without risk of falling. Most cities contain at least one permanent portal to the Worldwound, facilitating the demon lord's invasion and conquest of Golarion. Less useful portals open intermittently or allow only smaller creatures through; these rarely have a permanent camp or structure associated with them. These unattended portals are a means for mortals to sneak into Deskari's realm unobserved, or for opportunistic demons to reach the Material Plane without paying the demon lord's minions for access to the permanent portals.

or attempts to charm them. Unless he has need of them or requires them to specifically avoid a creature or fragile plan, he allows his creatures to roam free and consume anything they can kill.

With his worshipers, Deskari is aloof, impersonal, and ruthless. He is quick to punish unexpected failures, but coolly tolerant when a minion doesn't complete a task the demon lord didn't expect it to finish, or if the failure is part of a greater plan. Although Golarion is his current focus,

he has plans for many worlds, and sometimes his priests may not communicate with him directly for years at a time, instead receiving their spells through his demonic generals as he focuses his attention on other realms.

As the demon lord of locusts, he is aware of the natural cycles of eggs and swarming. He knows that swarms naturally consume everything in their path and leave a barren wasteland, and understands that sometimes a swarm must in turn be consumed to sustain another creature. Just as some insects remain buried for years to mature before they swarm, he instructs his cultists to remain hidden and quiet until he deems it is time to strike. Those who emerge too soon and are destroyed for their haste are unfit specimens unworthy to serve him in their current form—but they provide him with new larval souls with which he can create new demons. Some cultists bury their Abyssal allegiance so deeply they forget who they serve (sometimes using magic to facilitate this), awakening only for a specific trigger or at the demon lord's will so they can carry out their mission.

Deskari appears as an insectoid centaur creature. His lower half resembles a six-legged locust. From where the locust's head should be sprouts a vaguely humanoid torso covered in chitinous plates, with arms holding a terrible scythe called *Riftcarver*. This blade looks like the scissoring claw of a mantis and was crafted from the remains of his father's monstrous mate. Deskari's head is that of a monstrous insect, with bulging eyes, multiple mandibles around a serrated mouth, and a crown of spikes or antennae. His wings are individual swarms of biting flies extending from his back, and he can see with their countless eyes just as well as with his own.

When Deskari is pleased, locusts consume enemies' supplies or gather harmlessly on walls, blades become poisoned, hostile swarms disperse, and worshipers' awareness expands as if they could see in all directions. When he is angry, sounds are drowned out by a hideous buzzing, swarms turn hostile and consume anything they can reach, the earth collapses into sinkholes, and bones become brittle.

Deskari is chaotic evil, and his portfolio is chasms, infestation, and locusts. His weapon is the scythe. His unholy symbol is a pair of crossed locust wings that are dripping with blood. His sigil resembles a one-eyed insect's head. His domains are Chaos, Destruction, Evil, and War. His priests are adepts, clerics, witches, and fallen paladins. Although locusts are part of his portfolio, he has no druid worshipers—in fact, he and his followers are especially hateful toward druids.

Outside of the Worldwound, Deskari—like most demon lords—is worshiped in secret, particularly in Mendev, northeastern Numeria, and Brevoiy. Some of these cults pretend to be lust- or vengeance-cults of Calistria, deceiving ignorant layfolk into believing that locusts are sacred animals to the goddess. Within the Worldwound, he is



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worshiped openly, and his faith is one of the most popular ones in that cursed land. Most of these Worldwound cults are led directly by one of Deskari's servitors, usually one with levels in a priestly class, or by a powerful mortal paired with a demon of the same strength.

Most Deskari cultists are humanoid denizens of the Worldwound. Tieflings with insectile features often worship him, as their hideous deformities usually make them unwelcome in other religions (even those of other demon lords). A small number of worms that walk pray to him, particularly those who seek to speed up the end of the world.

Other quasi-cultists are little more than slaves and playthings of Deskaran demons, compelled by the threat of torture to give lip service to Deskari. Many of these demons are completely inhuman, having metamorphosed multiple times as they rose in Deskari's favor, and the larger ones have taken to adorning themselves with humanoid slaves chained or otherwise attached to their bodies. Broken by torture and the horrors they have seen, these slaves phonetically echo whatever their captor says. Cultists call these demons "evangelists of Deskari" and lavish them with gifts when they visit a temple.

Many cultists serve Deskari thinking that they'll be rewarded for their worship when he takes over the world. However, he sees them all as pawns in his bid to dominate the mortal world, and will kill, sell, enslave, or sacrifice them if necessary. Their mortal lives mean little to him—even less than those of his demon minions—for if they die loyal to him, they'll reform as larva in his Abyssal realm to serve as either food for his demons or raw material for creating new demons. The smarter cultists realize this is their fate, and graft demonic flesh onto themselves (see demonic implants, *Lords of Chaos: Book of the Damned*, Vol. 2 44) or enter pacts to sell their souls in a bid to be rewarded by becoming more powerful demons in death.

Services to the Lord of the Locus Host involve humming and hissing, playing percussion instruments (often skulls filled with finger bones and sealed shut with resin), burning candles, and sacrificing animals or humans. Sacrifices are usually fed to a live insect swarm (either one living in the temple or one summoned by a priest), and the bones are kept as trophies and decorations for the temple or ritual items. Some rituals require tearing up a holy text from another religion, and perhaps feeding it to a swarm if such creatures eat paper or leather. Cultists place little value on ceremonial clothing, even in the Worldwound—displays of power are more important than wearing the "proper" garments. Most prefer segmented armor that makes them look like insects.

Deskari has no interest in marriage, and his cult has no dogma for or against it. He himself "mates" as he wants or plants his eggs in creatures if he wants to reproduce, and considers the concept of swearing an oath to a particular mate as stupid as promising your food that you won't eat





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any other kind of food. Likewise, his followers may take lovers or concubines or make temporary or permanent arrangements according to their desires or local customs. In many cases, a wealthy cultist takes an attractive slave as a mate, sacrificing it to the demon lord when it is no longer sufficiently pleasing.

### Temples and shrines

Deskari's temples are usually built in caverns or ruined churches, or set into the walls of cliffs or chasms. Most include a pit full of insects or worms, which are used for performing his demonic obedience and for disposing of sacrificed creatures. In lands where his worship is forbidden, these temples are often disguised as worm farms, with the bins of squiggling vermin supposedly used to enrich the soil for better farming.



### A Priest's Role

As with most demon cults, priests' main task is to acquire power and use it to further their patron's plans for domination. Priests are expected to watch for opportunities to corrupt or destroy enemies or the plans of enemies. Many become skilled at concealing or eradicating bodies, and may ally themselves with a thieves' or assassins' guild in this role. Priests usually have ranks in Bluff, Intimidate, Knowledge (nature), and Perception.

Daily tasks for a priest usually involve cultivating local vermin, exploring suitable places for expansion and colonization, or sending resources or slaves to the Worldwound to aid in the demon lord's efforts there. Although Deskari's priests work together with other cult cells (especially in the Worldwound), they are not averse to infiltrating and destroying cults that worship other deities—even other demon lords.

### Holidays

Worshippers of Deskari honor the first day of spring, a time of new life when insects emerge from their cocoons, and the harvest moon, when those creatures descend upon mortal crops and devour them, leaving ruin and sorrow in their wake. Some cultists breed swarming insects and deliberately free them during Desna's Swallowtail Festival, allowing them to tear apart the goddess's butterflies to devastate the morale of her worshippers.

### Commandments

As Deskari's main interests are infiltrating new territory and destroying those who oppose him, his commandments echo these sentiments.

**All Fall to a Thousand Bites:** A swarm defeats its enemies not because of the strength of its individuals, but with the unified power of overwhelming numbers. The loss of one creature in a swarm is meaningless if the swarm survives, and these losses may actually be essential for victory, like ants drowning themselves to form a bridge across a river so their fellows may cross. If you serve the Usher of the Apocalypse, you may be sacrificed to achieve that goal—or another may fall so you may succeed.

**Life Feeds on Life:** It is the nature of every living thing to sustain itself by consuming weaker creatures. Even hives may turn to cannibalism if food is scarce so that the greater whole may survive. Be willing to sacrifice your minions, your allies, or even your own flesh if that means you succeed. A man who starves to death is useless, but one who survives by eating his own arm may live to fight on. Do what you must do in order to persevere.



## Holy Text

Deskari's holy text is a confusing, almost poetic series of 10 inscribed clay tablets called *One Thousand Voices in My Flesh*. Part spiritual guide, part screed against the mortal world, it is a first-person anecdote written by a human priest infested with Deskari's eggs, which spoke to him in many voices until he was compelled to take his own life by leaping into a chasm. It includes many odd phrases in Abyssal that have different meanings depending on whether the speaker is talking about minds, living bodies, or food.

## Relations With Other Religions

Deskari is the son of demon lord Pazuzu and is on friendly terms with him. Nominally, the Usher of the Apocalypse is subservient to the Lord of the Wind Demons, but in practice they are near equals, and Deskari's success has added to Pazuzu's status. He is allied with Baphomet, whose secret cultists are experts at infiltrating and corrupting mortals, and whose work is a critical part of Deskari's plan to conquer Golarion. Many other demon lords have agents running loose in the Worldwound, though most of these are just opportunists who paid Deskari for the use of the portals from his realm to the Material Plane and have no ongoing relationship with him.

Deskari has a minor rivalry with nascent demon lord Izyagna (*Lords of Chaos: Book of the Damned*, Vol. 2 38), a demon who exists simultaneously in seven horrific antlike bodies and can command swarms. However, Izyagna serves Lamashtu, so Deskari is reluctant to act against Izyagna for fear of turning the Mother of Monsters against him.

## Variant Spellcasting

Clerics of Deskari may prepare *create pit*<sup>APG</sup> as a 3rd-level spell, *cape of wasps*<sup>UM</sup> as a 4th-level spell, *vermin shape I*<sup>UM</sup> as a 4th-level spell, *vermin shape II*<sup>UM</sup> as a 5th-level spell, and *acid pit*<sup>APG</sup> as a 6th-level spell. His antipaladins can prepare *cape of wasps* and *vermin shape I* as 4th-level spells. His priests also have access to the following spell.

### ABYSSAL VERMIN

**School** transmutation; **Level** antipaladin 2, cleric 4, sorcerer/wizard 4, witch 4 (Deskari)

**Casting Time** 1 standard action

**Components** V, S

**Range** close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

**Target** one vermin or vermin swarm

**Duration** 1 minute/level

**Saving Throw** Fortitude negates (see text); **Spell Resistance** yes You infuse the target with power from the Abyss, granting it the fiendish creature simple template. The swarm gains DR 5/good if it has at least 5 Hit Dice, or DR 10/good if it has at least 11 HD. It gains cold resistance 5 and fire resistance 5 if it has at

## Customized Summon List

Deskari's priests can use *summon monster* spells to summon the following creatures in addition to the normal creatures listed in the spells.

### Summon Monster IV

Vermlek (*Lords of Chaos: Book of the Damned*, Vol. 2 54)

### Summon Monster V

Fiendish giant locust (*Bestiary* 4 183, 288)

### Summon Monster VI

Fiendish giant mosquito (*Bestiary* 2 193, 292)

least 5 HD, or cold resistance 10 and fire resistance 10 if it has at least 11 HD. It gains spell resistance equal to its CR + 6. Once per day, it can smite good (as a swift action against a good opponent, the vermin adds its Charisma bonus to its attack rolls and its HD to its damage rolls until the opponent is dead). If the targeted vermin is under your command, it automatically fails its saving throw against this spell. This spell has no effect on vermin that already have the fiendish creature simple template.

## Servitor Demons

Deskari's demons usually have one or more insectile body parts, even those with humanoid forms such as babaus and vrocks. A Deskaran succubus might have compound eyes and locust wings, a Deskaran quasit might have insect heads, a Deskaran nabasu could resemble an anthropomorphic mosquito, a Deskaran glabrezu might have mantis claws instead of crab claws, and so on. Many of these fiends are his creations, a direct result of him implanting eggs in past victims. Some of the more powerful demons in his realm are his hideous children and grandchildren, born of many kinds of demons (although he is likely to consume any offspring who show inclinations of turning against him).

## Planar Allies

In addition to his servitor demons, Deskari has several generals who serve him in the Rasing Rifts and within the Worldwound, including the following.

**Kzuhisaak:** This demonic vermin<sup>WOR</sup> giant locust (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 4 183) has a fiery breath weapon and can fly into a rage like a barbarian. She carries swarms of her young in hollow spaces on her abdomen, and has been known to spray her hungry hatchlings at troublesome opponents. She prefers offerings of aasimars or archons, preferably ones that have been paralyzed with poison.

**Mnikhrask:** This derakni<sup>WOR</sup> Abyssal sorcerer practices a strange form of blood-based necromancy and uses his powers to reanimate the shriveled husks of his victims. He uses these creatures as bodyguards and shock troops, and prefers sacrifices of ogres, trolls, and hill giants for this purpose.